The Canning Wonder

By Arthur Machen

ELIZABETH CANNING,
Drawn from the Life, as ſhe ſtood at the Bar to receive her Sentence, in th
Seſſion's-Houſe, in the *Old-Bailey*.

The story of one of the most remarkable *causes célèbres* of the eighteenth century. both judicial
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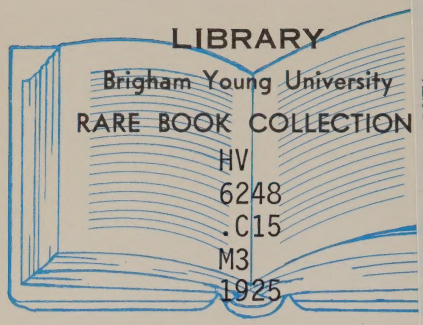
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THE CANNING WONDER

By the same Author

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Elizabeth Canning.

THE CANNING WONDER

By ARTHUR MACHEN

Fytton Armstrong
Arthur Machen
St John's 1930

Elizabeth Canning was a liar, perfect, total, and complete. p. viij

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PREFACE

THE case of Elizabeth Canning is one of the minor enigmas of the world. Like the song that the Sirens sang, and the name which Achilles bore when he dwelt among women, it may not be beyond all conjecture, but it is, assuredly, beyond all certitude. It is a puzzle. We may approximate, perhaps, to the answer; but we shall never possess it.

In our investigation, however, there is one palmary clue which we must seize firmly at the beginning, and never allow to escape us, and this clue is the sure and undoubted fact that Elizabeth Canning was an infernal liar. That is, the whole tale that she told on her return after her month's absence was a lie from beginning to end; a lie as a whole, a lie in all its parts. She had never been to the house of Mother Wells, in Enfield Wash, in all her born days—till the morning of 1st February 1753, when she and her friends, and the power of the Lord Mayor of London proceeded to Enfield Wash, and put everybody found in Mother Wells's house under arrest—or, to be more precise, detention.

This fact, the fact that Elizabeth was a liar, is, as I say, the one sure thing amidst a maze of lies, uncertainties, possibilities, probabilities and improbabilities. There are all sorts of lesser facts appearing in the evidence which lead to this conclusion as a probable one; but there are two incidents which make it, not probable but certain. The first of these is the incident of the

penthouse. When the girl laid her first information before Alderman Chitty, she swore that she made her escape from Mother Wells's house by breaking through a window and sliding down over a penthouse.

There was no penthouse below the room where she said she was imprisoned. And, as I have pointed out in my comment on this part of the case, no conceivable amount of mental confusion, muddle, inaccuracy, imperfect observation can possibly lead to the creation of a non-existent penthouse. If a man says that he escaped from a place of confinement by sliding down a waterpipe, and it is found that there is no waterpipe *in situ*: then that man is a deliberate liar, without benefit of clergy or anything else.

The second point is as conclusive. Elizabeth said that she had been set on by two men on the night of 1st January 1753, and taken by them to a house about ten miles from London. The room into which she was taken was a kitchen, for there was a dresser in it, and in the mid-eighteenth century dressers were not distinguished dining-room furniture. The interesting Elizabeth was confronted by a woman who asked the girl if she would " go their way," and wear fine clothes. Their way was understood by Elizabeth to be the way of whoredom, and she refused. Whereupon, the woman cut off her stays and pushed her up some stairs into a room, where she dwelt in captivity till 29th January.

Now, on 1st February, as we have seen, Elizabeth, her friends, and the Law raided

Mother Wells's house. Elizabeth was taken into the kitchen and set upon the dresser. She made no comment on the room or on anything in it, though she stayed there five or six, perhaps, seven or eight minutes. She was then taken into another room, where the people found in the house were detained by the Lord Mayor's officer. She at once identified the gipsy, Mary Squires, as the person who had cut off her stays and imprisoned her. It remained for her to identify the room where she was imprisoned. She was taken into the hall, or passage, and saw some stairs. She said that those were the stairs. So she was taken up the stairs and shown three rooms. These rooms did not even remotely correspond to the room she had described. So she was taken down again into the kitchen, and saw an open door and a short flight of steps leading from it. And then, for the first time, she pointed out these stairs as leading to the place of her imprisonment, and proceeded to the hayloft and identified it as the room in which she was confined. True, it was not a bit like her description given to the Alderman; but it was less violently unlike than the bedrooms she had seen at the top of the main staircase.

Once again, the conclusion that Elizabeth Canning was a liar is inevitable. If her tale had been a true one, she would have identified kitchen, stairs, loft at the moment of her entrance. If her tale had been a true one, she would never have ascended the totally dissimilar main-stair of the house in search of her prison.

Elizabeth Canning, then, was a liar, perfect, total, and complete. She had never been at Mother Wells's, Enfield Wash, before 1st February 1753. Then, where was she between the night of 1st January and the night of 29th January?

That is a question that will never be answered with certainty, or with anything approaching certainty. The Crown, prosecuting Elizabeth for perjury, had to give it up. The prosecution had suggestions to make. They said Elizabeth might have gone away to have a secret baby. They offered no scintilla of evidence in support of that suggestion. They said Elizabeth might have gone away to be "salivated"—treated for syphilis. The physician who saw the girl soon after her return, poohpoohed this notion in the most emphatic manner. And then the Crown said that the disappearance of Elizabeth was a plot in which her mother, a fortune-teller, and a man named Scarrat were principally concerned. Again, no jot of evidence to support this contention.

The case of Scarrat is a very perplexing one. It seems that it was he who suggested Mother Wells's house to Elizabeth on her return, as the likeliest place of her ill-treatment and confinement, she having first mentioned her surmise that she had been shut up in a house on the Hertford road. And it seems pretty clear that Scarrat, formerly a frequenter of the Wells brothel, had a grudge against Mother Wells, and was very willing to have her hanged. As will appear in the course of the case, the

identification of Mary Squires by Elizabeth was a mistake, due to an odd accident. But when the Crown asks us to believe that Scarrat was the main contriver of the whole business, then I think we must hesitate. For if this had been so, would not Scarrat have furnished the girl with a minute description of Mother Wells's house, and thus have saved her from uttering a mass of lies and contradictions?

But as to where Elizabeth was, and what she did during the month of her disappearance: as to that, as I have said, there can be no sure answer. I incline to think that someone, perhaps known to her, perhaps a stranger, took possession of her as she was going home on the night of New Year's Day, 1753. I think this someone hustled her into a coach, and got in after her and proceeded to press his suit with a certain vigour and alacrity, whereupon Elizabeth squealed, but was not seriously annoyed. Somebody heard a woman shriek in a coach in Bishopsgate that night. And then, let us conjecture, the unknown took Elizabeth to a brothel and left her there the next morning, and that Elizabeth fell into the ways of the house. Perhaps she met Scarrat in the course of her occupation; perhaps he said that he knew a still snugger house on the Hertford road. If he did, then Elizabeth's reference to the Hertford road is explicable, and if Scarrat had met Elizabeth in the way I have suggested, then his running round to Mrs. Canning's at the first news of Elizabeth's return is also explicable. And granting all this—mere possibility of

course—then Scarrat's mention of Mother Wells is also explicable. He had not concerted anything up to that moment; it was then, as he heard the phrase, Hertford road, that he made up his mind to use Elizabeth's escapade as a means for the destruction of his old enemy, Mother Wells.

But here arises a difficulty. Elizabeth Canning returned to her mother in a very sad state. There seems no doubt of it. The apothecary said she was very ill. The physician said she was very ill: starved, emaciated, in grave danger. How had this happened?

Again, it is mere conjecture; but I surmise that she had fallen out with the Mrs. Harridan who kept the establishment to which she had been taken; that Mrs. Harridan had endeavoured to starve her into submission, perhaps for four or five days or a week, that Mrs. Harridan had taken away her clothes, and that she had finally escaped at the cost of some slight violence; the famous wound in the ear having been inflicted by Mrs. Harridan's finger nails.

But if all this really happened so, it was not a story that Elizabeth would like to tell. And so, with aid from Scarrat and others she created the fable that we have called "The Canning Wonder."

ILLUSTRATIONS

Elizabeth Canning	*Frontispiece*	
Sir Crisp Gascoyne	*To face page*	16
Bethlehem Hospital and Moorfields	„	24
Mother Wells's House at Enfield Wash	„	54
Henry Fielding	„	94
Elizabeth Canning at the House of Mother Wells	„	158
Mary Squires and the Inspector	„	204
Elizabeth Canning receiving her Sentence	„	244

I

On the 21st of February 1753, a very simple case was begun at the Old Bailey before the Lord Mayor, the Recorder, and others, his Majesty's Justices of Oyer and Terminer. Two bad old women, Mary Squires and Susannah Wells, were alleged to have robbed and mishandled a young girl named Elizabeth Canning, a domestic servant. Or, in the pleasing style of the judicial formula:

"Mary Squires, widow, and Susannah Wells were indicted; the first, for that she on the 2nd of January, in the dwelling-house of Susannah Wells, widow, on Elizabeth Canning, spinster, did make an assault, putting her, the said Elizabeth Canning in corporal fear and danger of her life, and one pair of stays, value 10s., the property of the said Elizabeth, from her person, in the dwelling-house did steal, take, and carry away. And

"The latter, for that she, well knowing her the said Mary Squires to have done and committed the felony aforesaid, on the said 2nd of January her the said Mary did then and there feloniously receive, harbour, conceal and maintain, against his Majesty's peace, and against the form of the statute."

So far the indictment, and to us the case seems one of the trivial kind that a competent police magistrate would settle in five minutes,

awarding some trivial punishment. But in the eighteenth century the theft of goods to the amount of ten shillings was a capital charge. We have been accounted—rather, perhaps, we have accounted ourselves—a humane nation; but the penal code of England in the reign of George II and long afterwards was perhaps the most savagely and abominably cruel that the world has ever known.

However, the facts in this affair of the bad old widows seemed simple and clear enough. Elizabeth Canning, a young girl of the rosy and chubby kind, told her pathetic little story. She had been to see an uncle and aunt on New Year's Day 1753, and had stayed with her relatives till about nine o'clock at night. Then, her uncle and aunt, who lived at Saltpetre Bank, East Smithfield way, saw her part of her journey home, accompanying her as far as Aldgate. Then, Elizabeth alone came down Houndsditch, and over Moorfields by Bedlam Wall, that is pretty near the Liverpool Street Station of to-day. And at this spot " two lusty men, both in great coats," took hold of Elizabeth and robbed her of half-a-guinea in gold and three shillings in loose silver. And then these rough fellows took Elizabeth's gown off her back, and her apron, and her hat, folded them up and put them into a greatcoat pocket. Elizabeth screamed; she was promptly gagged, and her hands were tied behind her. They were rough men and rude men, for one of them gave the girl a blow on the temple and said: " Damn you, you bitch, we 'll do for you by and by." Whereupon

Elizabeth, who was subject to "convulsion-fits"—I suppose epilepsy—became unconscious, and remained unconscious for six hours, as she reckoned. When she came to herself, she was by a large road, where there was water. The two men were dragging her along, still rude in their manner. One of them said: "You bitch, why don't you walk faster?" And so they took her to the house of the prisoner, Susannah Wells, who lived at Enfield Wash, about eleven miles from London; a part which is still obscure enough for most Londoners, though not so solitary as in the time of George II.

At this point the two rude men disappear and are heard of no more. In the kitchen sat the prisoner Squires, and by the kitchen-dresser stood two young women. Mary Squires took Elizabeth Canning by the hand, "and asked me"—said Elizabeth—"if I chose to go their way, saying, if I did, I should have fine clothes." The phrase "their way" was not explained, but Elizabeth, it seems, felt that it was not a nice way, and answered "no." Thereupon, Mary Squires took a knife out of the dresser-drawer, cut Elizabeth's stay laces and took the stays. And on that vile action, Mrs. Squires slapped the poor girl's face, called her a bitch—the vocabulary of villainy seems to have been strictly limited, then as now—and pushed her into a hayloft, four or five steps up from the kitchen. The door of the loft was shut. Mary Squires said that if ever she heard Elizabeth stir or move she would cut her throat; and the girl found herself in the room where, as she declared, she was kept

in durance for a whole month. No food, no drink were brought to her; in the room was a pitcher with about a gallon of water in it, and about twenty-four pieces of dry bread. On this provision the girl said she lived for the month of her imprisonment, soaking the hard crusts in the water. It was a dull room. There was a fireplace and a grate in it, but neither bed nor bedstead; nothing but hay to lie on. Examined in chief, Elizabeth said that she never went down the stairs, and never attempted to escape; cross-examined, she said that she had once tried the door and found it fast. Finally, on the 29th of January, at about four o'clock in the afternoon, she broke away a board that was nailed before a window in her prison and jumped down, about eight or ten feet. But the ground was soft and clayey, and the girl said she was not hurt. She had taken an old bedgown and a handkerchief which were lying in the grate of her prison as a sort of substitute for the gown and hat and apron that the rude men had taken. In squeezing out of the boarded window she had cut her ear and she tied the handkerchief about her head, over the wound which was " very bloody," and so she stole away. It was light, the girl said, when she jumped from Mrs. Wells's window; it would be about forty minutes before sunset, and one is inclined to wonder why Elizabeth did not wait till the winter night set in. Still, she may have marked the ways and times of the house, she may have listened and heard no murmur of voices, she may have been seized with a sudden frenzied desire for liberty that

would not be denied. All sorts of improbable things are constantly happening. At all events, as the girl's story goes, she crept up a lane behind the house, and crossed a brook and over two fields, and so into the high road to London. She had recognized this road from some chink in her prison window; she had formerly been in service with a Mrs. Wintlebury, who often sent parcels by the Hertford Coach, and Elizabeth, peering out through some opening in the boards had seen the Hertford Coach go by. Again, the journey between Enfield Wash and London took six hours; it was a quarter past ten when the girl got to her mother's house in Aldermanbury. The apprentice was the first person she saw, then her mother and her brothers and sisters. Mrs. Canning immediately went into a fit; epilepsy was, no doubt, in the Canning family. Then all the neighbours came rushing in—the disappearance of Elizabeth Canning had been a month's wonder. Finally, the counsel for the Crown asked Elizabeth what she had noticed in the hayloft where she had been held prisoner. She answered: " a barrel, a saddle, a basin, and a tobacco mould; a thing they do put pennyworths of tobacco with." Elizabeth was then cross-examined, but without any perceptible effect; and then came the turn of Virtue Hall, one of the young ladies who were standing by the kitchen dresser when the girl was dragged in by the two rough men. Virtue said she was a lodger at Mrs. Wells's house; that Mary Squires lodged in the house and had been there seven or eight weeks—that would date her arrival to the

first or second week in November 1752—that one of the two men who brought Elizabeth in was George Squires, the son of Mary Squires, the other unknown to her. Miss Hall was asked the meaning of the phrase used by the old gipsy to Elizabeth, "would she go her way"; and Virtue bluntly answered: "she meant for her to turn whore, but she would not." Speaking in general; Virtue Hall's evidence corroborated Elizabeth Canning's in most particulars. There is a slight discrepancy as to the pitcher of water. Elizabeth said she found it in the hayloft, Virtue that Mary Squires filled it with water and took it up to the loft soon after Elizabeth's imprisonment. And then again Virtue seems to amend her evidence as to the date of the gipsy's arrival at Mrs. Wells's house; Mary Squires, she says, had lodged there for six or seven weeks in all, that is up to the time of the arrest, a few days after Elizabeth Canning's escape. And then counsel—note the odd grammar of the age—

"What was you in that house?"

"I went there as a lodger; but I was forced to do as they would have me"—to follow their way, in fact. And it may be acknowledged at once that Mrs. Susannah Wells was commonly known as "Mother Wells"; "Mother," being even in our day, most mysteriously, no title of honour; and that her house in Enfield Wash was by no means of good fame, as she herself admitted, "as to her character, it was but an indifferent one, that she had an unfortunate husband who was hanged." It is probable

enough that Mrs. Wells was much like the Covent Garden lady cited somewhere by Smollett, who, arguing with another lady of the quarter, said (I quote from memory):

"Damn you! What have you against me? You may say that I am whore and thief, but that all the world knows; but beyond that, you bitch, what have you to say against me?"

Then at the trial came the evidence of Thomas Colley, Elizabeth Canning's uncle. He told of his niece's visit on New Year's day, of how his wife and he went along with her to Houndsditch almost to the "Blue Ball," of how they parted with her between the quarter and the half past nine. Then, Elizabeth's mother told how she had advertised for the missing girl, how she fell into a fit on her return, how her daughter was subject to fits, and in what miserable case she was on her return, and of the urgent necessity that there was for supplying the girl with glysters. John Wintlebury, Elizabeth's old master, one of the many visitors to Mrs. Canning's on the famous night of the return, spoke about Elizabeth's telling him how she had recognized the Hertford coach, and finally was quite sure that Elizabeth's story as told in the court was, in fact, the story she had related when she came home, though the later tale was somewhat more full than the early one.

Now, it must be understood that, after Elizabeth Canning's return in the sad state that has been indicated, she went before an Alderman and swore an information against some woman unnamed who had assaulted her and robbed

her. The Alderman, with some hesitation, gave a warrant, and a little party went down to Enfield Wash to execute this warrant. Elizabeth and her mother and a couple of women friends went down in a coach; and her men neighbours and supporters rode before on horseback. The people on horseback went faster than the coach, and got to Mrs. Wells's house a hour or a hour and a half before it. They immediately proceeded to arrest everybody that they found in the house, and one of them, Joseph Adamson, gave evidence as to what had happened. He said that after the people of the house had been secured, having seen "the room"—it is clear that Mr. Adamson meant the room in which Elizabeth had been imprisoned—he thought that the girl should be able to give some account of it. So he rode back towards London, and meeting the coach "asked her about it; she described the room with some hay in it, a chimney-place in the corner of it, an odd sort of an empty room."

Here I think we should note that by her own account Elizabeth had been imprisoned in this room from four o'clock in the morning of 2nd January, till four o'clock in the afternoon of 29th January: almost a month of weeks, to use her own phrase. It is generally believed that a prisoner obtains an almost painfully minute knowledge of every niche in his dungeon, learns by heart every dent and dint and scar on the tragic walls and the unhappy floor and ceiling. It may be that Elizabeth, having had so frightful and prolonged an experience, was a little vague.

However, Mr. Adamson may have reported her loosely and carelessly. He proceeds, and says that he carried Elizabeth out of the chaise, and into the kitchen, and set her on the dresser, and ordered all the people of the house to be brought to her, to see if she knew any of them. " Upon seeing Mary Squires, she said, 'That is the woman that cut my stays off, and threatened to cut my throat if I made a noise.' "

It really would appear that Mr. Adamson was a careless sort of man. For, at a later stage of these proceedings, at a different trial with a different prisoner, and a different charge; it clearly appeared that the people of the house were not brought into the kitchen to be identified; it was Elizabeth who was taken into the room where they all lay under arrest.

However, Mr. Adamson proceeds easily and surely. He tells how Elizabeth identified Virtue Hall and another young woman as having been present in the kitchen when she was brought in by the two young men. Then Elizabeth was " carried up to examine the house; she said, none of the rooms she had seen was the room in which she was confined." Then Mr. Adamson said he asked if there were any other rooms in the house, and " they " said: " Yes, out of the kitchen." And Mr. Adamson explains that he knew all about the room out of the kitchen, that he had been in it, but he said nothing because he had a mind to see if she knew it.

This is odder and odder. A little while before, Mr. Adamson had given the Court to understand that when he came first to Mrs.

Wells's house on horseback, he at once recognized "the room," presumably because it corresponded with the descriptions that Elizabeth had already given to her friends and to the Alderman. This, one would think, should have been enough for Mr. Adamson; but it was not. He rides back and asks Elizabeth about the room. She indulges in vague generalities, and thus reassures her cautious friend. But now he must try her once more. He has forgotten, it seems, that Elizabeth has already been in the kitchen, that she displayed no emotion at the sight of the door which led from the kitchen to her prison, that she uttered no word identifying the place of her captivity, that she had been taken all over the house without her giving a single hint as to the futility of the proceedings. Mr. Adamson was, I am afraid, a forgetful man as well as a careless man. Still, we can but do our best; and when Elizabeth was at last taken up to the loft over the kitchen she said at once: "This is the same room in which I was, but there is more hay in it than there was then."

It may seem an impertinent interruption, but I think it is only fair to say that when Elizabeth swore her information before the Alderman she forgot to mention any hay at all. She told the Alderman that she had only the bare boards to lie on.

Continuing the ingenious Adamson:

"She was then pretty near a casement; said I, 'If you have been so long in this room, doubtless you are able to say what is to be seen out here.' She described a hill at a distance, which is

Chinkford Hill; I believe she could not see it at the time she spoke about it, for I was between her and the casement, with my back towards the casement."

And here we should like to know the breadth firstly of the casement, and secondly of Mr. Adamson's back.

Mr. Lyon of Aldermanbury came next. It was with him that Elizabeth had been in service immediately before her disappearance. He followed Mr. Adamson in his inaccuracy as to the place of identification: "when she came, she was carried into the kitchen, and set on a dresser, and the people set all around her." Mr. Robert Scarrat followed, mistakenly and oddly declaring that Elizabeth's story before the Alderman was in all respects the same story as that which she had told the court. He was one of the friendly party that preceded the Cannings to the house on the Wash, but there is nothing particularly salient about his evidence; and the like applies to the testimony of another of the expedition, Edward Rossiter. Finally came Sutherton Backler, the apothecary who saw Elizabeth Canning on 30th January, the day after her return. He said:

"She was extremely low and weak; I could scarce hear her speak, her voice was so low, and her pulse scarcely to be felt, with cold sweats; she told me she had had no passage during the whole time of her confinement; she was then in such a condition, she had a glyster administered the same day; she had many glysters given her, which after some time relieved her."

Mary Squires, the gipsy, then called some witnesses in her defence, who made no impression whatever on the jury. She was found guilty and sentenced to death. Wells was also found guilty of aiding, abetting, comforting and the rest of it ! Sentenced to be branded and imprisoned for six months. And really, taking the evidence as reported, without the occasional interruptions and interjections which I have allowed myself, one does not see what other verdict the jury could have brought. Elizabeth Canning was, for anything that appeared to the contrary, a girl of perfectly good character; and indeed, so far as I know, nothing has come out to Elizabeth's discredit from that day to this—excepting, of course, the queer business which we are now considering. Apparently, there was nobody whose affair it was to contrast Elizabeth's information sworn before the Alderman with her Old Bailey evidence, there was nobody to expose the little inconsistencies and inaccuracies of Adamson and Lyon; respectable tradesmen both of them. Then Elizabeth's evidence as to harsh treatment and starvation was corroborated by the testimony of the apothecary who saw her the day after her return. And last of all; what could her motive be in swearing away the life of the old gipsy ? Why invent fantastic fables against a poor old object such as Mary Squires ?

There was only one little matter which might have made the jury pause, if they had been in a condition to think at all. As it was they were not in that condition, being engulfed in one of

those whirlpools of folly which occasionally make England an unhappy spectacle to the world. We hear a great deal in these days about the villainous influence of the popular press, of tearing, raging propagandas conducted in the newspapers, of furious campaigns by which our sober people are led astray. Now, I do not love the popular press; but it seems to me fair to point out that nothing at all like it was in existence in the reign of George II; and yet we have never equalled the great Elizabeth Canning campaign in furious and ferocious folly. There was pitiable silliness enough and to spare in the business of " the Russians," in the affair of " the Angels of Mons "; but these delusions did no one any harm, rather they tended to comfort and console the wounded, the frightened and the simple-minded. But here, in 1753, in the very dead middle of the sober, sceptical eighteenth century we have our stolid, wigged Londoners foaming at the mouth as they contemplated the hideous vice of Mary Squires, the mirific and superhuman virtue of Elizabeth Canning. Common sense, common justice, fair dealing were abolished; the mob—which included many men of high position and high culture, of the famous leisurely, lettered class for which the age is famous—could no more hear reason than a Baconian Biliteral Cipherman can hear reason. Consequently, the jury were incapable of listening to the evidence given by John Gibbons of Abbotsbury, near Dorchester, of William Clarke of the same place, or of Thomas Greville, of Coombe, near Salisbury.

And yet the evidence of these men was remarkable enough. John Gibbons said he was master of the house called "The Old Ship"; that on the 1st of January the prisoner Squires came into the house, with George her son and Lucy her daughter, that Mary Squires peddled handkerchiefs, lawns, muslins and checks; that he had known prisoner for three years; in cross-examination, that he fixed the day by the coming of a special exciseman to his house, in place of the ordinary exciseman, who was ill. Then William Clarke, who had also known the gipsy for three years, told how he had walked with Mary, her son, and her daughter some distance along the road, parting from them at Crudeway Foot, four miles from Abbotsbury and three from Dorchester. And, last, Thomas Greville, witnessed that the gipsies stayed at his house, "The Lamb," on the night of 14th January.

Now we have seen that our jury might well have asked themselves why Elizabeth Canning should invent fables against the life of an old gipsy, hitherto unknown to her, if that old gipsy had not in fact and deed stolen her stays and shut her up in a hayloft. But, when they heard the stories of these simple countrymen of the West; why did they not speculate as to the singularity of their conduct? What possible inducement, they should have said to one another, can have brought two alehouse keepers and a cordwainer to commit perjury at the Old Bailey on behalf of the old vagrant Mary Squires, a member of a race never highly es-

teemed with country people, who have hens to lose, and small gear that they do not care to have stolen from them ? All three were positive that they recognized Mary Squires, two of them had known her as travelling up and down their Dorset lanes and hamlets for three years; all three were positive as to their dates. If they spoke the truth; it was quite clear that Mary Squires could not have robbed Elizabeth Canning of her stays, value 10s., on the morning of 2nd January. But the jury were suffering from that disease, obscure and sometimes terrible, called Collective Hallucination or Delusion. So they found the gipsy guilty; and she was condemned to death.

II

It seems almost a miracle that the old gipsy woman, Mary Squires, was not executed. They hung up people by the dozen then as a matter of routine. A hanging in 1750 was reckoned of no more consequence than six months' imprisonment in these days. In addition, Mary Squires was a gipsy, a rogue and a vagabond, one of a people who had always been in the worst repute as poachers, thieves, and fortune-tellers. And then, again, old Mary had admittedly made her living such as it was, by selling smuggled goods to the country people. Again and again; it was a wonder that she was not hanged.

But, somehow, it struck people in authority that there had been a miscarriage of justice too ghastly and monstrous even for that lax age to endure. The Lord Mayor, Sir Crisp Gascoyne, made certain keen inquiries into the case, and memorialized the Throne. He, " the lord mayor of your faithful city of London, begged leave to represent to your Majesty, that before the Trial of Mary Squires, for the robbery of Elizabeth Canning, and of Susannah Wells as accessory, many unfair representations were printed and dispersed, which could not fail to excite public prejudice against them.

" The fatal consequences whereof, in depriving those unhappy wretches of a material

Sr. Crisp Gascoyne Kt.

part of their evidence, engaged me from the high station I have the honour to bear, to express my duty to your Majesty, and the public, by making this inquiry."

The Lord Mayor mentioned that in the course of his inquiry, Virtue Hall—who, being apprehended with the rest at Mrs. Wells's house, turned evidence against Mary Squires—had voluntarily and publicly retracted all that she had sworn to at the trial; and, finally, that there was not a single point or circumstance that could lead him to doubt the entire innocence of the unhappy convicts. And the result was, that the gipsy was first respited and shortly afterwards granted a free pardon.

This was in the April of the year 1753; and in September there befell an odd interlude in the tremendous business of Elizabeth Canning; a sort of comic piece or solemn farce interposed between the two tragical acts of the drama. It will be remembered that three men, two of Abbotsbury in Dorset, and one of Coombe near Salisbury, had sworn as to their having seen Mary Squires, down in the country on dates which made it quite impossible for Mary to have been at Enfield Wash on 2nd January 1753. The " friends " of Elizabeth Canning, as these imbeciles were commonly called, were deeply wounded by the pardon granted to Mary Squires, and, in an hour of acuter folly, they determined on prosecuting the three countrymen for wilful and corrupt perjury. Their conduct, though maniacal in this as in all else, was perfectly natural: the Canning

premises once granted. Thus: it was agreed that Elizabeth was a saint and martyr. But if she were a saint and martyr, she clearly spoke the truth. Therefore, Mary Squires was at Enfield Wash on 2nd January 1753; and therefore, again, any man who said Mary Squires was in Dorsetshire on that day lied, and should be punished accordingly. And so the three; John Gibbons, William Clarke and Thomas Greville were arraigned at the Old Bailey on 10th September. I shall not attempt to give at full length the " infinite jingle and jangle " of the indictment. But here is a piece of it:

" Upon which same trial, one John Gibbons, late of Abbotsbury, in the county of Dorset, victualler, on the 21st day of February, in the year aforesaid, to wit, at Justice Hall aforesaid, in the parish of St. Sepulchre, in the ward of Farringdon Without, in the city of London, came in his own proper person as a witness on behalf of the said Mary Squires, and upon the matters contained in the said indictment, and the said John Gibbons, then and there in the Court aforesaid, before the said justices last above-named, and others their fellows assigned as aforesaid, upon the trial aforesaid, was in due manner and form sworn and took his oath upon the holy gospel of God, as such witness (the same Court then and there having a sufficient authority to administer the same oath to the said John Gibbons on that behalf). And the said John Gibbons, on the said 21st day of February, in the year aforesaid, not having God before his eyes, but being moved and seduced by the

instigation of the devil, and wickedly and unjustly devising and intending to pervert justice and to procure the said Mary Squires unjustly to be acquitted of the said crime "—did, in short, swear that he had seen Mary Squires at Abbotsbury in Dorset on 1st January, and that Mary Squires stayed at Abbotsbury till 9th January.

The indictment over—there are two pages of it in small type—the witnesses for the prosecution were called. Not one of them appeared, except a Mary Woodward, who declared that she knew nothing at all about the matter. Whereupon the jury acquitted the defendant.

More jingle jingle about William Clarke. Again, no witnesses appeared, and Clarke was acquitted. The like procedure in the case of Thomas Greville; he, too, was acquitted. A messenger was sent out to fetch the prosecutors into the Court, but no prosecutors appeared. But in the meantime, Mr. Davy, counsel for the three defendants, addressed the Court, and spoke very much to the purpose. The fact was, he declared, that the hearts of the prosecutors, the famous friends of Elizabeth, had failed them at the last moment. The defendants had refused to be frightened:

" They are private countrymen, without any connections in this part of the world, and totally unconcerned at any reports which may prevail here—within the narrow circle of their acquaintance, their characters will remain unblemished, let fame do its worst; because the charge against them is the attestation of a fact,

which all their acquaintance, all their parish, and their whole country, know to be true."

Fifty witnesses, Mr. Davy said, had been procured by the prosecutors to give evidence against the three countrymen. Only one appeared, and she knew nothing of consequence. And why? Because, counsel continued, the prosecutors had realized at the last moment that to pursue a prosecution founded on the foulest perjury would involve them in ruin. The friends of Elizabeth saw all Dorset standing ready to confirm Gibbons and Greville and Clarke in every particular that they had uttered; they saw that the singular circumstances of the former trial—when witnesses in favour of old Mary were terrorized away from the doors of the Court—were not to be repeated: and so the messenger of the Court went in vain on his errand. The farcical interlude of Gibbons, Clarke and Greville was over. It was not till 29th April 1754 that the last act began; and this was the trial of Elizabeth Canning for wilful and corrupt perjury. The indictment occupies about five thousand words. It is a stupendous exercise of the great arts of endless repetition, involution and confusion, to the bewildering of the intelligence and the losing of all clues and sense and knowledge of anything and everything in a black cloud of verbiage; the whole of this monstrous verbiage proceeding, oddly enough, from the desire of the law to make every statement so absolutely clear that mistake should be impossible. But the effect of the six pages, is briefly, a declaration that when Eliza-

beth Canning swore that Mary Squires cut off her stays on the morning of 1st January 1753, Elizabeth Canning lied, and was therefore guilty of wilful and corrupt perjury; and likewise, and in addition, that all the stories Elizabeth Canning had told of her adventures in the house of Susannah Wells were a pack of lies. Thus, Elizabeth deposed that there was a grate in the room wherein she was imprisoned; the truth being, as the prosecution declared, that Elizabeth wasn't imprisoned in this room, and furthermore that there was no grate in it.

But the law mercifully provides remedies for its own confusions. The jury must have listened to this terrific indictment for a hour and have realized that they had been bewildered out of their wits. Whereupon, the indictment over, Mr. Gascoyne rose and proceeded to open the case. Now, we have all read how Mr. Skimpin opened an illustrious case—Bardell and Pickwick—in the Court of Common Pleas; and how the illustrious reporter of these proceedings declares that the case appeared to have very little inside it when he had opened it, " for he kept such particulars as he knew completely to himself, and sat down after a lapse of three minutes, leaving the jury in precisely the same advanced stage of wisdom as they were in before." This may have been true of Serjeant Buzfuz's junior; but hardly of Mr. Gascoyne. What Mr. Gascoyne did was to " boil down " the indictment, to give a more or less intelligible *précis* or abridgement of it, selecting the main issues and passing over such minor points as the

non-existence of the grate in the room in which Elizabeth Canning was not imprisoned. When Mr. Gascoyne had opened the case, the jury must have had a very fair notion of the issue which they were to try. And then came the entirely lucid and reasoned speech of the senior counsel for the prosecution, Mr. (afterwards Serjeant) Davy. And, here, to begin with, the indictment is boiled down and resolved into its quintessence:

" Gentlemen, the indictment sets forth, that the defendant, maliciously and deliberately intending to pervert the due course of law and justice, and to procure one, Mary Squires, to be convicted of a robbery, did, upon the 21st of February 1753, in this Court, give false testimony against her."

There was the root of the matter. The jury were now perfectly and clearly informed as to the matter of the trial, and may be presumed to have emerged successfully from the black and stifling and confounding clouds of the indictment. And on this foundation Mr. Davy builds up his tale.

And to begin with, he ventures on an hypothesis which, in must be confessed, he had no means of supporting. He said that " to preserve her character " Elizabeth Canning found it necessary to frame an excuse for her absence from her master's service between 1st January and 29th January. But then he qualifies the " preserve her character " phrase by saying that he does not feel inclined to suggest the real reason of the girl's absence, " lest he should

wrong her." And since Mr. Davy was not gossiping in a coffee house, but leading for the Crown at the Old Bailey, we may fairly conclude that Mr. Davy did not venture to suggest the real reason for Elizabeth's absence simply because he did not know it.

Then we come again to the friends of Elizabeth Canning. These very absurd people, it appeared, were so penetrated by the thought of the glorious chastity of Elizabeth under the severe trial of starvation that they raised a fund, firstly in order to prosecute the wretches who had wronged the martyr—or, to be pedantic, confessor—and then, to reward their heroine for her constant purity. Briefly, Mr. Davy suggests that there had been something very queer about that month's disappearance; that Elizabeth had invented and—he might have added—had suffered others to invent for her a clumsy enough story. The stupid tale " caught on " and raised the faithful imbeciles to a white-hot enthusiasm, after the manner of stupid tales in all ages. The Canning Fund was the first result of this large glow of virtue; and so, suggests Mr. Davy, it became necessary to stick to the stupid tale through thick and thin; or else, good-bye to the fund and the halo. With this, and with some remarks on the scandalous manner in which the whole matter had been prejudged by advertisements in the papers, by printed bills and by pamphlets, Counsel retold the original story as told by Elizabeth; that is the story we have heard already. There is more detail. The two rough men were engaged for half an hour in

stripping Elizabeth, robbing her, and hitting her into a fit in Moorfields, and all that time nobody passed by. Mr. Davy then makes his objections to the story. He thinks that if the two men had wanted to rob Elizabeth, they would have robbed her and not kidnapped her, and that if they had wanted to kidnap her, they would not have robbed her. But, with Mr. Davy's posthumous leave, it seems to me that the ruffians might very well have combined both lines of action. Then Counsel declares that " multitudes " of people would be passing by Moorfields between nine and ten o'clock at night, and no doubt that was an important point, well taken. Eighteenth-century Londoners were wild dogs; they thought nothing of being abroad at ten, eleven, or even twelve. Improbability after improbability is dwelt on. How was it that the two men, bearing along the girl in a six-hour fit—is there such a thing as a convulsive fit, or epilepsy, which lasts for nearly six hours ?—were not interrupted ? How was it that the tempters of virtue were content with one refusal, and made no further effort against the chastity of their prisoner ? Why did no one approach her in her prison, to see what was happening, whether she were alive or dead ? And so on, with many other arguments after the manner of counsel in all ages, which are hardly so convincing as counsel suppose. For example; Mr. Davy asks whether, on the allowance of dry bread and water described by Elizabeth, she could possibly have walked the twelve miles between Enfield Wash and her mother's

BETHLEHEM HOSPITAL AND MOORFIELDS

house. Mr. Davy's question requires the answer that such a feat is an impossibility, but such an answer would be unwarranted. It is hardly possible to set any limits whatever to human endurance or human capacity. For all I know, modern science, which is always telling us that we eat a great deal too much, may declare that Elizabeth's diet was ideally perfect. For all I know, we may yet hear of the " Canning Treatment " for gout, rheumatism, dyspepsia, and cancer; and also for athletic training. People can stand a great deal; it was possible, though not probable, that Elizabeth Canning could have walked from Enfield to London in spite of the starvation of which she spoke.

Then Counsel took up the case of Mary Squires, and her alibi. He mentioned in the first place her extraordinary cast of features, quoting the old woman's phrase about her own face on her arrest: " that the Almighty had not created her likeness." By the consent of all, this old gipsy and peddler of smuggled goods was a woman of quite unprecedented and extraordinary ugliness. She was a grotesque, a human gargoyle, a unique in hideousness; and one wonders, I think, why Counsel did not at once seize on the supreme importance of this fact. Elizabeth, on her reappearance, said she had been robbed by a tall, black, swarthy woman; she said nothing of being robbed by the most hideous woman that she had ever seen.

However, Mr. Davy proceeded to tell how Mary Squires the gipsy, with her son, George, and her daughter, Lucy, were roaming about

the west country towards the end of the year 1752. On 29th December they lodged at a little inn at South Parrot, in Dorsetshire. The next day they set out from South Parrot and passed the night at Litton, at an alehouse, and stayed there till 1st January 1753, when they walked on to Abbotsbury, getting there in the evening. The gipsy party was well known at Abbotsbury, having often visited the place on their rounds; and at Abbotsbury they lay till 9th January. This fact, said Counsel, he would prove by the evidence of eleven witnesses. The tracking of the gipsy trail continues: Portersham on the night of 9th January, Ridgway on the 10th, Chettle on the 12th, Martin (in a farmer's barn) on the 13th, Combe on the 14th. So, on and still on towards London, till on Thursday, 18th January, they are at Basingstoke. And here comes a little bit of romance of the " Sally in our Alley " kind, which was also an important bit of evidence. Lucy, the pretty daughter of an ugly mother, had a friend who was dear to her down in Dorsetshire, one William Clarke, a shoemaker of Abbotsbury; one of the witnesses for the defence, it will be remembered, in the first trial. True William had gone to meet his Lucy at Litton, and had walked with the party to Abbotsbury, and then again Clarke accompanied them Londonwards as far as Ridgway, where he took an unwilling leave, making Lucy promise to write a letter soon. It was at Basingstoke that the promise was fulfilled. But Lucy couldn't write, and so the Basingstoke landlady wrote for her, duly dating the letter Basingstoke,

the 18th January 1753. The letter was to be produced, the Basingstoke postmark would be shown on it. And since there was no coachway between Basingstoke and Dorchester, the letter had first gone to London, and so it bore the London postmark as well.

To proceed with the itinerary: Bagshot the 19th, Brentford the 20th, Page Green, by Tottenham (at the " Seven Sisters "), the 23rd. And on the 24th the gipsies went to Enfield Wash and inquired for lodgings. They were gipsies, vagrants, abjects, and so they were advised to go to Susannah Wells, who was undoubtedly nasty, and probably very cheap. And at Mrs. Wells's house they were all apprehended on 1st February.

Now, a most important point. Elizabeth, bursting with grief and virtue, comes back to her mother on the night of 29th January. Her friends rallied round her in an immense manner, and on 31st January they all go before Mr. Chitty, the sitting Alderman, and apply for a warrant against Susannah Wells, on suspicion of robbery. The Alderman seemed a little doubtful, and asked Elizabeth to give an exact description of the room in which, she said, she had been shut up.

" She swore it was a little, square, dark room, in which was an old stool or two, an old table, and an old picture over the chimney . . . and so far from any pretence of hay, she complained of having been forced to lie every night upon the bare floor."

Then, there were other discrepancies between

this, the second edition of the story, as we may call it, as contrasted with the third and definite edition, presented at the trial of Mary Squires and Susannah Wells. She told the Alderman that the bread in her prison was in five or six pieces (at the trial twenty-four); that she left some water in the pitcher when she came away (at the trial, the water all consumed); that there was a penthouse under the window whence she escaped (at the trial, no mention of a penthouse).

Alderman Chitty granted his warrant and Elizabeth and her friends set out on the morning of 1st February on the journey to Enfield Wash, and secured all the people they found in Susannah Wells's house: Mrs. Wells, Mary Squires, her son, two daughters—the other daughter, Mary, had joined her mother at Brentford—Virtue Hall, Fortune Natus and his wife, Judith Natus. And then Mr. Davy describes the house:

"At the entrance into the house there is a staircase, the bottom of which is within two or three yards of the street door; this staircase leads to three rooms of the first floor, in one of which lay the old gipsy and her two daughters, in another, George Squires, and in the third, Mrs. Wells and her daughter and Virtue Hall. Below stairs, on the left side of the little passage from the street door is a parlour, in which all the family were placed as soon as they were seized. On the right hand of the passage is the kitchen, from which a door opens to a little flight of seven or eight steps leading into a sort of lumber-room or workshop, where Natus and his wife lay upon a bed of hay. These steps or stairs are enclosed

in the room, there being no door but at the foot of the steps, which separates it from the kitchen. And this place which some call a workshop and others a hayloft (on account of some hay usually kept there) the defendant was pleased to fix upon as the place of her confinement."

Counsel proceeded to describe the arrival of Elizabeth, her mother and her zealous friends, on the morning of 1st February. The friends went in advance on horseback and looked for a room such as Elizabeth had described, a place square, dark, and little. But no such room could be found; so, in default of better, the friends fixed on the lumber-room or hayloft as the prison-cell, though it was long and light and narrow (thirty-five feet long by nine feet eight inches wide). But the hay? There was a lot of hay in the place, and Elizabeth had said nothing about hay; had said, indeed, that she had nothing to lie on but bare boards. However, one of her friends, Mr. Adamson, whom we have seen already at the first trial, went back to meet the coach and returned exultant, " brandishing his hat, and exulting: 'We are all right; she says, there is hay in the room.' "

But Elizabeth was wrong in pretty well all her details. Where she said there was a grate, there was no grate, nor had there been a grate, since the chimney opening was full of spiders' webs and ancient dirt, thick and undisturbed. There was a large chest of drawers in the loft; Elizabeth had said nothing about a chest of drawers. It had been placed there since her escape? No: it was moved, and " fifty spiders

race out." She had said there were pictures on the wall over the chimney opening. Nothing of the kind; there was an old broken casement, bound to the wall by black cobwebs. There was no penthouse under the window of her alleged escape; though she had spoken of such a thing.

Elizabeth came up with her mother in the coach, and was taken into the kitchen. She did not shudder and point to the door leading to her prison. She said nothing about it. In a quarter of a hour or so she was taken into the parlour, on the opposite side of the passage. Here was everybody who had been found in the house that morning. Mother Wells was set on the right side of the chimney; Mary Squires on the left; and Elizabeth was taken in that she might identify the woman who had cut off her stays and stolen them. And let it be remarked that it seems highly probable that Messrs. Adamson and Scarrat knew these dispositions, and that it is at least possible that one of them, Scarrat, most likely, had whispered in Elizabeth's ear that she would see Mother Wells sitting on the right hand of the chimney. For Scarrat had been suspicious from the very first; a few minutes after Elizabeth's return to her mother, listening to her broken words about the Hertford road, he had wagered that she had been at Mother Wells's. And so chaste Elizabeth was led into the parlour to identify the thief.

But a very extraordinary thing had happened. A few minutes before the avenging entrance of Elizabeth, the two old women had changed

places. Nobody tells us why. It may have been mere accident. Perhaps the gipsy had been placed in Mrs. Wells's favourite elbow chair, and Mrs. Wells had mentioned the fact. Or, again, the constable in charge of the prisoners —there was, presumably, an officer in the room —had conceived certain faint suspicions of the hustling earnestness of Scarrat and Adamson, and a certain resentment at their eager interference, and had ordered the two women to change places. However that may have been, Elizabeth entered the parlour and without a moment's hesitation, hardly seeing the gipsy's face, if indeed, she saw it at all, pointed to Mary Squires, the woman on the right of the chimney, and said: " This is the woman who robbed me of my stays."

So far as I can make out, the gipsy was crouching over the fire, smoking her pipe; her face, they say, almost covered with a clout. She took no notice of Elizabeth's words, till one of her daughters cried out: " Lord ! mother, the young woman says you robbed her." Mary Squires started up from her chair in horror and amazement, drew away the clout from her face, and cried: " I rob you ! Take care what you say; if you have once seen my face you cannot mistake it, for God never made such another ! " And being informed that the theft she was charged with had been committed on 1st January—it was, in fact, the 2nd according to Elizabeth's tale—the gipsy said at once that on that day she had been in Dorsetshire, more than a hundred miles away. Then Elizabeth was taken

all over the house, and finally, with some hesitation, said that the lumber-room was the place in which they had confined her. Whereupon some of her friends, comparing the actual room with her description of it before the Alderman, came to the conclusion that Elizabeth was a liar, and abandoned her cause. But Scarrat and Adamson remained her steadfast and busy champions.

Then are all sorts of minor discrepancies and contradictions put before the Court. Fortune Natus, a poor farm labourer, was to be produced to swear that he and his wife, Judith, had slept in the hayloft all through December 1752 and January 1753, and that they had never seen Elizabeth Canning till the morning of 1st February 1753; and that the jug from which Elizabeth said she drank during her imprisonment was in constant daily use in the way of fetching water from the pump. Ezra Whiffin and his son, John Whiffin, were to show how they had bought an old sign from Mrs. Wells, and had taken it out of the loft on 18th January; men who had been lopping trees outside Mother Wells's house were to tell how they had chatted with Virtue Hall and Sarah Howitt, the two girls leaning out of one of the windows of the supposed prison chamber, on the 8th of January. Then Elizabeth had told about three contradictory tales as to the pitcher and the water in it; and, finally, there was the old bedgown, which she said at first she had taken out of the loft to escape in, and later, declared to be the property of her mother. An odd point this, which arose as follows. When the Lord Mayor

was conducting his inquiry into the case, after the conviction of Mary Squires, he ordered that the said bedgown should be exposed in some public place with a view to identification. This course was opposed by Elizabeth on the ground stated; that the dud in question was her mother's property: whence it seems pretty clear that the girl was afraid that the bedgown might be identified, and in her terror forgot that by claiming the thing as Mrs. Canning's she was confessing to manifest perjury.

III

MR. DAVY was followed for the prosecution by Mr. Willes, who made some neat points of his own. He showed, firstly, how easy it would have been to escape from the lumber-room or hayloft; and, secondly, how simple it would have been to call for help.

"The window towards the east neither boarded nor fastened; but three feet from the floor, and but nine from the ground. The casement so large that a very fat man might have got out of it; so little away from the ground that a child might have slipped down without hurting himself. And yet in this cage, with the door open was this extraordinary girl confined for a month, without once trying to get out."

And again:

"If she was afraid of breaking out, why should she not call out of the window for assistance? It was near at hand; the Hertfordshire road was not above sixty yards from the north window, and she frequently saw the coachman pass by, who used to drive her former mistress. Besides this, there is a little lane directly under that window, which was used every morning and night by the farmers and their servants, who went that way with their cattle to the marshes. There is likewise a pond not above seven or eight yards from the window, where the townsmen watered their horses, and in frosty weather

it was a sliding-place for all the boys and girls in the village."

The argument seems conclusive. It is quite certain that Elizabeth was not held prisoner against her will in Mother Wells's cockloft.

The examination of the host of witnesses began. Among the first was Thomas Gurney, the taker of the shorthand note on the trial of Mary Squires, and (I believe) the inventor of the shorthand system which young David Copperfield learned with such infinite pains. And Mr. Gurney, reading from his notes, not at all perturbed that a pen and ink skyrocket stood (according to David) for " disadvantageous " in his system, repeated the evidence given by Elizabeth Canning at the first trial. And then began the great procession of men and women of Dorset, who were sure that the gipsy, Mary Squires, was down in their county when she was supposed to be stealing at Enfield Wash.

Their testimony does not begin in the surest manner. Esther Hopkins, who kept a house of entertainment for travellers of all sorts at South Parrot, said: " I really believe in my conscience this (Mary Squires present in Court) is the old woman that was at my house on the 29th of December 1752, with her son. . . . I never saw a woman more particular in my life "— meaning, I take it, not that Mrs. Squires found fault with her entertainment, but that the witness had never seen such an odd-looking woman before. But " really believe in my conscience " is not absolute certainty, and Esther Hopkins was cloudy and hesitating as to the presence of the

gipsy's daughter, whom she did not identify, though she thought George Squires was the man who accompanied the gipsy: "to the best of my knowledge." And, oddly enough, the next witness, Alice Farnham, who kept a public house at Winyard's Gap, near South Parrot, who recognized the old woman and her son—"I took particular notice of her, and compared her to a picture that I had in the room of old Mother Shipton"—was in the same sort of uncertainty as to the daughter. Old words appear now and again in Alice Farnham's evidence. George Squires carried a bag, "a little fardle"; the three gipsies were "clean and fitty."

George Squires, the son, was the next witness, a muddled and confused young man, as it would appear, not too clear as to dates, not too certain as to the name of the village where he slept on this night or that night. But he remembered a night of festivity at Abbotsbury, in Mr. Gibbons's parlour—Mr. Gibbons, it will be remembered, was a witness at the first trial. George Squires was asked what company there was in the parlour:

"There were a great many of my acquaintance; I can't call them all to mind; there was Mr. Wallace, a shopkeeper, and Mr. Bond, a schoolmaster, he got fuddled that night; Mr. Wallace generally drinks cyder, he came in for a penny pot of cyder. I danced with Gibbons's sister, and Mr. Clarke with my sister Lucy; I can't mention all the company, it is impossible; we danced country dances till about eleven or

twelve at night; we danced several nights there after the first night."

So George, in his not always secure way, gives an account of the gipsy pilgrimage. The party arrived, he said, at Abbotsbury, on 1st January 1753, and went away on the 9th. Mr. Clarke, Lucy Squire's sweetheart, accompanied them to Portersham, where they slept at an alehouse called "The Chequer," going on the next day to Ridgway, and sleeping there at "The Ship." Then Counsel:

"Did anything happen remarkable at Ridgway while you was there?"

—Note the "was" for "were," and cf. (as the school-books say) Smollett, *passim*—

"There was a dead horse, and a man skinning him as we came by; and I left a piece of nankeen, about three yards and a quarter, for my reckoning with my landlord. I was afraid that silver would fall short; so I went to his bedside and told him I was afraid money would fall short before I came home, and desired he would take that till I fetched it."

They go through Dorchester where "a very great water" was out, and George carried his mother through it, and the miller's man carried Lucy. The party did not delay at Dorchester, for a letter had been received from Lucy's sister, Mary, who desired them to hurry home as soon as possible, since she was very ill in London. Tawney Down, Chettle, Martin, Coombe, Basingstoke; the itinerary continues, and at Basingstoke there was a small incident which turned into evidence of the greatest importance.

Mr. Clarke had asked Lucy to write him a letter on her way. But Lucy could not write, and perhaps the landladies of most of the small alehouses where they slept were no more literate than Lucy. But at Basingstoke a widow woman, who kept the "Spread Eagle," wrote to Mr. Clarke for Lucy; and that letter was posted, and its postmark showed that the gipsies were really at Basingstoke in the middle of January, not at Enfield Wash.

From Basingstoke to Old Basing, thence to Bagshot, and so to Brentford. Then George went to London to look after sister Mary, and brought her back with him to Brentford. They went on to the "Seven Sisters" by Tottenham; and thence to Mrs. Wells's house at Enfield Wash.

"I was recommended to her house for lodging; they said she was a very civil woman; I never saw her in my life before this time, if I was to be racked to death. There is an acquaintance of mine who owed me seven pounds, fifteen shillings in London, and I went there to stay till I could receive it, to Mrs. Wells's house, we went to a woman's house who sells pease soup at Edmonton; we would have lodged there; but my mother wanted to wash, and the woman said that it was not customary, so she recommended us farther, to a place called Cheshunt; upon that we went to Mrs. Wells's house, being recommended there by Mrs. Long's daughter."

"Did you see this young woman at the bar?" (Elizabeth Canning) asked Counsel.

"No, I did not," replied George. "I never

saw her before we were taken up in my life, if I was to be racked to death; I'll stand with a sword put to my heart, if ever I saw her till she come in the chaise; we came there on a Wednesday, and at the end of a week and a day my mother was taken up."

And then George Squires was cross-examined by Elizabeth Canning's counsel, and it must be confessed that George made a very poor figure. It was pointed out to him that he had given a clear and minute account of his journey from Dorset to London; but when asked to describe his previous journey from London to Dorset, he broke down badly. He couldn't name the towns through which he had passed, he had forgotten the signs of the alehouses where he had slept: he was pathetic:

" Really, sir, I hope you will excuse me, be pleased to excuse me; I cannot tell, indeed; please to excuse me."

Then Mr. Davy explained. He said he would not call sister Lucy, who was rather more stupid than brother George. He would, however, call Mr. Willis (an attorney) who had conducted George Squires from place to place of the gipsy journey from Dorset to London, and had verified the evidence as to this journey. But the Court ruled that what Mr. Willis had heard was not evidence, thus anticipating by a considerable time the similar ruling of Stareleigh J. (C. P., Bardell *v.* Pickwick, Dickens Reports). Accordingly, the evidence of the men of Dorset was resumed. John Fry, tiler and plasterer of Litton, Dorset, remembered seeing " the old

woman" (Mary Squires), her son and her daughter at Litton, at the house of James Hawkins, on 30th December 1752. He remembered the date very well, "because it was in the new Christmas time"—the change of style was a sad shock to old-fashioned England, and the memory of the old style lasted well into our day. So late as 1893, I remember a small farmer on the Chilterns dating some birth of a calf or death of a pig by the phrase: "it was the day after old Christmas Day." "This is the very old woman," said John Fry, using fine old English, and he said also that he had known her for thirty years, that she had been Litton way many times. It would seem that these eighteenth-century gipsy pedlars had their beats, much like the Punch and Judy men in "The Old Curiosity Shop." They had some obscure headquarters in London, which they usually occupied in the winter, and from this retreat (in Southwark, or Clerkenwell, or the back parts of the City) they sallied forth in the summer, north or south, east or west, according to their custom.

Next, Francis Gladman, gardener of Litton, Dorset, who remembered very well having seen the three gipsies in Litton, on Monday, 1st January 1753. He had this reason for remembering the exact date:

"The reason is, we generally ring in the New Year; I went to ring a peal, and the people of the parish gave us some liquor, that is, some ale and some cider, to drink; we concluded to go to the alehouse with our jug of cider that was given us, to have something put into it; we went to

Hawkins's; the old woman sat there; I sat down close by her, and asked her if she could tell fortunes? She said, No, she was no fortune-teller; I asked her if she could talk Spanish? and said I thought I had seen her abroad somewhere or other; she said, she could not; I asked her if she could talk Portuguese? She said, No; I said, nor French? She said, No; nor Dutch? No: she said she knew what I said, but could not answer me. Upon this an old gentleman said, 'You must cant to her, talk gipsy to her, and she'll answer you.' Then I said, 'You are one of the family of the scamps'; she said, 'No, I am no scamp'; and a young man in the room said her name was Squires."

There are interesting things to note here. I should like to have Mr. Gladman's autobiography. For though a gardener—and, as appears, a shaver or barber—in an obscure village down in Dorset—he had evidently seen many cities of men. And he clearly knew his London very well indeed. " Scamp " was thieves' slang of the day; it signified robber; " Dick has gone on the scamp," implied that Dick had turned highway robber. The old gipsy understood very well what Gladman meant, but the young countryman took the phrase, " the family of the scamps," literally. Then, another odd circumstance: Mary Squires told Gladman that she knew what he said, but could not answer him. Whence I infer that Gladman put his linguistic questions in the languages of the several countries named, and that the gipsy knew the brief phrases, having heard them in the backwaters

that surged then in the courts and alleys of lower London, in the cosmopolitan gatherings of vagrants, thieves and wastrels. Actors of an older generation will remember how their professional forefathers once knew a little of this underworld, and brought from it such queer phrases as " nunty munjare," omee of the carser," " doner and feeles," " nunty dinary "; and Italian scholars will recognize the words as Italian, fallen on very evil days. It is likely enough that when Gladman asked the gipsy whether she could speak Spanish what he said was " abbler spaniel ? "

To much the same effect, James Angel, a staymaker of Litton. He, too, rang in the New Year, and took his cup of cider to be fortified by Mr. James Hawkins, and so had seen the gipsy smoking her pipe. And Hawkins himself, the alehouse keeper, confirmed the evidence of the others, remembering the gipsies, remembering the date of the bell-ringing, remembering the gipsy dinner of two fowls. This meal had been mentioned before, I think by George Squires, and Elizabeth Canning's counsel, not unnaturally, had hinted that the dinner seemed somewhat costly for wandering folk. But not so; fowls were sixpence apiece then in Dorset; cheaper than butcher's meat, as they affirmed. The fowls were gone into very thoroughly: " where were they bought ? " " Of one Dance Turner, of our parish." " Were they boiled or roasted ? " " They were boiled, I believe; we don't eat roast meat in the country but very little "—presumably to save the trouble of the spit and the basting.

Then William Clarke, Lucy's sweetheart: and he declared that the famous fowls, of which he had a share, were boiled fowls; and I think we must all admit that they were boiled. Mr. Clarke generally confirmatory of what the Court had heard already, and with a certain quiet warmth where Lucy was concerned.

"Upon what terms did Lucy and you part, upon good terms?"

"We were upon civil terms; I never saw anything by her but civil terms; she is as honest a girl as any in the world for what I know."

John Gibbons, of the "Old Ship," at Abbotsbury, testified that the three gipsies came to his house on 1st January 1753, "sometime in the darkish of the evening." There was merriment at his house that night; dancing; "George danced with a sister of mine named Mary Gibbons, and Lucy danced with William Clarke; the old woman was in the house at the time."

Andrew Wake said he had once been an exciseman and was then in the footguards. When he was guaging he was ordered to Abbotsbury by the Dorchester supervisor to take the post of one, Mr. Ward, who was ill. He went to "The Ship" on 31st December 1752, and saw the three gipsies there, and lay with George in one of the bedrooms of the inn, and saw the merriment and the dancing. "Who played the music?" asked Counsel.

"A blacksmith, named Melchisedech Arnold, played on a fiddle; he sold cider; I surveyed his house; I remember I had been taken ill coming my rounds, and was sitting by the

fireside, and the old gentlewoman prescribed something to cure me, she got me something hot; the next morning, or the morning after, she made me a buttered toast before I went out."

The late exciseman told the Court how he had been discharged from the Customs for "stamping," otherwise neglect of duty. Then a high officer of excise was shown the book giving the doings of the Abbotsbury Office from 21st December 1752, to 15th March 1753. Everything was in order: Andrew Wake had officiated for John Ward, indisposed, from 1st January 1753, to 13th January: and all this important in its way as rebutting the insinuations of Elizabeth Canning's counsel, that the simple shepherds of Dorset were reckoning by Old Style and not New Style. Then, George Clements of Abbotsbury, who had known the gipsies for many years, declared that he saw all three of them at the "Old Ship" on New Year's Day 1753: Melchisedech Arnold, blacksmith and fiddler, recollects his fiddling and George and Lucy dancing to it, and the presence of old Mary at the festivities, and is, moreover, quite certain that when he says 1st January, he means "this present calculated time."

John Ford, a carpenter and keeper of a general shop at Abbotsbury, was a pleasant witness, but Counsel was displeased with him about some little question of hours of the day, going so far as to insinuate habitual inebriety on the part of John: "You are drunk now and ought to be ashamed of yourself." But he, drunk or sober, remembered the three gipsies:

" I shook hands with her (the old woman), drank with her son, and kissed her daughter; the daughter, son, and she came all together to the excise office in our town (there they lodged); John Gibbons keeps the house; he is a nephew of mine; I drank with George, or else I am not here now."

Daniel Wallace, mercer of Abbotsbury, to much the same effect: he fixed the date of his meeting with Mary Squires by an event in his life.

" I had bought a new jack, and had a shoulder of mutton roasted for dinner on the Sunday; and the old woman was peeling potatoes, and asked me to dine with her; and I said I had something particular to dine on."

Hugh Bond, the schoolmaster who got fuddled (according to George Squires), gave evidence as to the presence of the gipsies at Abbotsbury: John Bailey, carpenter of Abbotsbury, to like effect, fixing the date by the departure of a brother " that used the sea ": Thomas Anson, a labouring man, saw the three on old Christmas Day (5th January): John Hawkins, a weaver, remembered the gipsies, but could not remember in the least whom he danced with at the " Old Ship." And so much for the Abbotsbury witnesses; some of them a little cloudy (like Hawkins) as to precise details, this cloudiness being due, likely enough, to the fact that Abbotsbury kept the New Year handsomely, and perhaps put in a little too much of something in the cider. But taking their evidence as a whole; it is absolutely conclusive. It is as

certain as anything can be that at four o'clock on 2nd January 1753 Mary Squires was at Abbotsbury, in the County of Dorset; and not at Enfield Wash, eleven miles from London.

Then we begin to trace the journey of Mary and her son and daughter from Abbotsbury to London, stage by stage. Mr. William Haines, tailor, of Portesham, had known Mary Squires for thirty years, and he remembered seeing her, her son, her daughter, and William Clarke at Portesham on 9th January 1753; so John Haines, son to William Haines. Next, Francis Bewley, keeper of the "Sloop Aground" at Ridgway, four or five miles from Portesham; he had entertained the party on 10th January.

"At first they had some roll and cheese; I carried it myself; and they had some beefsteaks for dinner, at about one or two o'clock or after."

This was the alehouse host with whom George Squires left the piece of nankeen in pawn.

"The first he said was, he asked me if I wanted a waistcoat, and said he had been to Abbotsbury, and money was short, and I should have it cheap. I said, I did not understand it, and I never had such a waistcoat in my life, and I did not want it: with that his mother came in, and said they were short of money, and desired to leave it in my hand, and desired I'd take it for the reckoning, which I did, and have had it ever since."

And Francis Bewley is certain of the date because of several circumstances: "by reason it was such weather, and the Blandford sessions

were sitting at Court; it was a flood, and the dying of the horse." Thomas Mockeridge, who had been selling turnips at Ridgway, "on the 10th of January, by the present stile," saw the party at Mr. Bewley's house, and gave William Clarke, Lucy's sweetheart, a lift home on one of his horses. John Taylor of the "Coach and Horses" at Fordington, a suburb of Dorchester, told of the floods that were out on 11th January, and of the manner in which the gipsies forded them. Thomas Hunt, a thresher of Chettle, recollected having harboured the three on the night of 12th January in an outhouse on some clean straw.

"How can you fix upon the time?"

"It was a very remarkable day, the old New Year's Day, which proved by altering the stile, to be the 12th of January." Again, witnesses testify to Mary and her son and daughter lying on the straw of Farmer Thane's barn at Martin. Joseph Hayter of Coombe, a maltster, saw them on the road between Martin and Coombe, "seven night after Old Christmas," with a chapter of county circumstances to make the date certain. Then the sister to Thomas Greville —one of the three indicted for perjury at the farcical second trial, and since dead—spoke of the gipsies coming to her mother's house, the "Lamb and Flag"; this confirmed by George Tovil of Coombe, who had business at the "Lamb and Flag" on 14th January, and by other witnesses of Coombe.

And then comes a singular blank in the itinerary. Mr. Davy, the leading Counsel, addressed the Court.

"Your lordship may remember that George Squires could give no account of places between Coombe and Basingstoke, therefore we could not collect any evidence between these towns; so the next witness comes from Basingstoke, which you will find to be forty miles from Coombe, and that is four days' journey according to their rate of travelling: they were at Coombe the 14th of January, and you will find them at Basingstoke on the 18th."

And there entered Mary Morris, who lived at Basingstoke, at the "Spread Eagle," a highly important witness.

Mr. Davy: "Look at that old woman."

Morris: "That old gentlewoman is Mary Squires, and the young woman is Lucy Squires, and the young man is George Squires. I wrote a letter for the young woman of the 18th of January. . . ."

"Look at this letter; is it your writing?" —(She takes it in her hand)—"Sir, it is my handwriting, directions and all; my little boy carried it to the post office, and Mr. Squires gave him a halfpenny because he did not stay."

The letter read, directed "To the posthouse in Dorchester, to be directed to Abbotsbury for Mr. William Clarke, cordwainer. This with care."

Basingstoke,
18 Jan. 175*.

Sir,—This with my kind love and service to you, and all your family, hoping you are

* The last figure, being in the corner of the paper, was supposed to be torn off. At any rate, it was missing.

all in good health, as I be at present. This is to acquaint you that I am very uneasy for your troublesome journey, hoping you received no illness after your journey; so no more at present, from your most obedient and humble servant,

LUCY SQUIRES.

I desire to hear from you as soon as possible. Direct for Lucy Squires at Brentford, near London. George and mother give their compliments to you, and all your family.

And Mary Morris was positive that the letter was written on the day of its date; was also positive that the three people there in Court were the three people who had come to the "Spread Eagle" on 18th January, for one of whom she wrote the letter.

Post office officials follow Mrs. Morris, and tell a somewhat complicated tale. Thomas Ravenhill, "assistant clerk to the western road," looks at a postmark on the letter, and says: "This is a mark of the General Post Office in London."

"What day of the month does it appear to be stamped?"—"The stamp is very imperfect; I cannot take it upon me to speak with certainty."

"Of whose handwriting is the postcharge?"—"That is mine, that is the charge, which is sevenpence; the original place where it came from to London is threepence; that is threepence up and fourpence down: it is directed to be left at the posthouse in Dorchester, that is fourpence."

With submission to the court of shadows and to this shadowy clerk of the western road ; I would venture to interpret this puzzle-headed sentence. In plain fact ; there was no direct postal service between Basingstoke and Dorchester ; and so Lucy's letter had to go first up to London, thence down to Dorchester ; and the total charge was sevenpence.

Somewhat muddleheaded, as it seems, is Thomas Ravenhill, as to the postmark.

" The stamp is so very imperfect, that I cannot with any degree of certainty tell ; the 9 is very plain, whether it is 19 or 29 I cannot say ; or 29 I cannot say; it is not the 9th, for if it was that figure would have been in the centre. "

" Look at the letters at the bottom of the circle."—The second letter seems to be an A."

" I think your stamps are marked M R for March ? "—" They are."

" Then there can be the name of no month, the second letter of which is A, but January and May ? "—" I do not recollect that the second letter of any stamp is A, but that of January and May."

The stamps were then exhibited in Court, and Mr. Merton for the defence, cross-examined on them. They were made of box, it appears, and a fresh stamp was used for each day, and at the end of a day, the stamp was often much defaced and clogged. And Mr. Ravenhill, somewhat clogged, is not quite sure whether the town's name on the postmark is of one line or two lines, can't say whether Basingstoke possesses a stamp, can't say whether all postmasters have stamps

or no. Altogether; Mr. Ravenhill gives us the impression of a man who had filled one particular corner at the General Post Office for a good many years, no doubt with accuracy and diligence; but taken out of his little rut became helpless, like one of his own mail coaches when it snowed on the western road, and landmarks were no more to be seen.

This matter of the postmarks and stamps and postal charges settled as well as it could be settled, three or four witnesses deposed to the presence of the gipsies at Brentford and at Page Green or Seven Sisters near Tottenham. At Brentford George Squires went in to London and brought back with him Mary Squires, the sister who had been ill. Page Green is about three miles from Enfield Wash; and the gipsies have been traced all the way from Dorset; excepting that odd hiatus between Coombe and Basingstoke ; a break of four days in George Squires' memory, of which I have seen no explanation. Still; whatever the party were doing on those four days—and I am afraid that the gipsies have never been exactly *boni et legales*—the case is unaffected. Mary Squires was not at Enfield Wash on 2nd January 1753. That is proved beyond a doubt.

IV

For the time we have done with the village alehouses and wayside taverns and the dim company that caroused in them, drinking ale, drinking cider, occasionally putting something into the cider, dancing, dining on boiled fowls or roast mutton; dwelling (for us) in a dusky, Hogarthian light, but all the while watching the three gipsies as they made their odd pilgrimage from Abbotsbury to Enfield Wash. Now the scene changes; the witnesses are urban, not rustical: and an Alderman is the first of them.

It was Alderman Chitty before whom Elizabeth Canning was carried by her friends on 31st January 1753; it was before Alderman Chitty that she made deposition as to the torts that she sustained: and here comes Alderman Chitty, fortified with the minutes taken at the time, to tell the court exactly what Elizabeth did say to him and what she did not say. Thus the Alderman examined:

Mr. Gascoyne: "During the time of this examination, did she mention any hay?" Ald. Chitty: "She said there was nothing in the room but those things she had mentioned; not one tittle of hay, neither do I remember what she said she lay upon."

And here comes a most important point. It will be remembered that great stress was laid

upon the curious and extraordinary ugliness of the old gipsy woman, Mary Squires. The old woman herself boasted—one might almost say —of the excessive oddity of her countenance; she declared herself to be a unique in the grotesque; God, she said, had never made another face like hers. And now the Alderman, asked whether Elizabeth Canning had described any gipsy, or any remarkable woman, replies:

" I asked her whether she should know the woman again ? she said she believed she should; but she did not make mention of any extraordinary woman doing this."

And the Alderman deposed that Elizabeth had told him that there were four or five pieces of bread in the room where she was shut up. Later, these pieces of bread were multiplied into twenty-four. And later, again, Elizabeth had mentioned the various objects that her prison had contained: a tobacco mould, a basin, a saddle, a barrel, hay. But Mr. Alderman declared that when Elizabeth came before him on the last day of January, two days after her escape, she said not a word of any of these things.

Another oddity. Mr. Alderman, on the information of Elizabeth, had issued a warrant for the arrest of Mrs. Wells. But, as he now told the court : " The name of Wells was not mentioned at all by her."

" How came you to grant a warrant in particular against Wells ? "—" Because they had learned the name since of the keeper of the house, and that they supposed to be this Wells."

"Were there any particular features described of the person?"—"No."

"Who mentioned the name of Wells, as Canning never mentioned that name?"—"I cannot remember that: it was mentioned, Mother Wells was the occupier of the house."

And upon this there arises, as it seems to me, a question not for laymen, but for lawyers. Had Mr. Alderman Chitty any right in law to grant a warrant for the arrest of "a person that goes by the name of Mother Wells, at Enfield Wash, in the county of Middlesex," on nothing more than gossip? The girl herself told the Alderman that she could say nothing as to the name of the woman who had robbed and imprisoned her. But "they"—names and addresses unknown—had said to somebody, somewhere, that Elizabeth Canning must have been at Mother Wells's house. And so, Alderman Chitty, having heard, by means which he does not specify, what "they" were saying, grants a warrant for the apprehension of a woman against whom there was nothing that even pretended to be evidence!

We get some light—but not much—on this puzzle from the evidence of Gawen Nash—of Welsh origin, I think—who kept a coffee-house in Gutter Lane, Cheapside.

"The alderman," testified Nash, "does not remember what it was that induced him to grant it (the warrant) against her (Mrs. Wells) in particular: I recollect it, because it was in a paragraph in the newspaper that she had been at the house of Mother Wells at Enfield Wash."

MOTHER WELLS'S HOUSE AT ENFIELD WASH

Whereupon counsel objects, reasonably enough, that a paragraph on a newspaper is not a sworn information, not a matter on which a warrant can be granted; and then Nash becomes confused, a broken reed of a witness.

" I recollect she (Canning) was asked where she had been, and that she, or somebody else, said she had been at the house of Mother Wells, at Enfield Wash."

" Recollect, if you can, whether it was she, or another person, who said so."—" Upon my word, I cannot positively tell which; but it was repeated aloud that she had been at the house of Mother Wells (that is a notorious bad woman); she being asked how she came to know she had been at Mother Wells's, she said she had heard her called so while she was under confinement in the room."

So, in the space of a minute or two, Gawen Nash says, firstly, that Elizabeth Canning " or somebody else," said she had been at Mrs. Wells's; secondly, that he really cannot remember whether the speaker of this word was Elizabeth or " somebody else "; thirdly, that a voice (anonymous) repeated aloud the name of Wells; fourthly, that Elizabeth was asked how she came to know that she had been at Mrs. Wells's; and fifthly, that Elizabeth then gave the grounds of this knowledge of hers. According to Gawen Nash, this stage of the proceedings before the Alderman must have been something like this:

The Alderman: At whose house were you?

Elizabeth: I don't know.

The Voice: At Mother Wells's.

The Alderman: How do you know you were at Mother Wells's ?

Elizabeth: Because I heard her called so.

—which is sheer midnight madness: Law Reports from Alice's Wonderland.

But there is no reason to suppose that Nash was a dishonest witness. He was a muddler, and Alderman Chitty was a muddler, and there was a crowd of people in the justice-room, a few of them with evil designs, but most of them in the early stages of the Canning mania; and the proceedings were so irregular that neither honest Chitty nor honest Nash had any clear notion as to what had really happened.

Otherwise, Nash is informing. He told the Court how he had gone to see his old friend, Mr. Lyon of Aldermanbury, to ask him whether there were truth in the newspaper report that his servant, Elizabeth Canning, had come home after her disappearance in a sad state. Mr. Lyon said it was all quite true, and Mr. Nash was one of the confused party that appeared before the confused alderman. He describes Elizabeth's evidence:

" The girl gave an account of the place where she had been in: Mr. Alderman Chitty asked her (how it might slip his memory, I cannot tell) what sort of a room she had been confined in ? Her answer was, that it was a little, square, darkish or dark room, with boards nailed up before the windows. . . . Upon being asked what she lay upon, I remember very well she said, she lay on the boards; which melted my

heart indeed: I felt an inward affection for the girl, upon recollecting it was cold weather at that time: for I think we had a good deal of frost at that time."

Touched by the misfortunes of Elizabeth, Gawen Nash, Lyon, Edward Aldridge and John Hague went down in a coach to Enfield Wash on 1st February, in order to assist in the capture of Mother Wells and of any other caitiffs and villains that might be found at the house on the Wash. Somewhere by Ponder's End, the party were met by several people riding furiously, who gave intelligence that they had seized everybody in the house. So, at about eleven o'clock in the morning, an hour before the arrival of virtuous Elizabeth, the Nash party got to Enfield Wash and drove up to the "Sun and Punchbowl," nearly opposite to Mrs. Wells's house. "There were people, some on horseback, and some on foot, all in an uproar." In brief: Mr. Nash went over Mrs. Wells's house. He saw the prisoners in the parlour. He saw the three bedrooms; he saw the hayloft, "a nasty room," with a makeshift bed of hay and sacking and all sorts of lumber in it; but he saw nothing in the house remotely like the room of her imprisonment that Elizabeth Canning had described. The hayloft was light and not dark, it was long and not square, the hay and rubbish in it had not been described by Elizabeth; and the rubbish described by Elizabeth was not seen there by Mr. Nash.

But Mr. Adamson was seen there by Mr. Nash, and he was making himself very busy.

Presently, after tossing with another man as to who should go to meet Elizabeth, Adamson rode off: " I conjectured it was to see if they had not gone to a wrong house: we were all impatient to see her; for if I had had a horse, I would have gone myself." And presently Mr. Adamson came riding back, waving his hat, and calling out: " We are all right yet, for she says there is a little hay in the room."

Then Elizabeth Canning arrived in the landau. She was brought into the kitchen, and put upon the dresser, and wine was mulled for Elizabeth and those who had been with her in the landau. Then somebody said: " Now let us call Mother Wells in"; but Mr. Nash pointed out that it would be better to take Elizabeth into the parlour where all the people of the house were under arrest, so that Elizabeth might identify the person who had robbed her. So the party went into the parlour, bearing Elizabeth with them. There was Mary Squires sitting on the right hand of the hearth, almost doubled up; and Mother Wells sat on the left hand of the hearth. Mary Squires had a black bonnet on, and Mr. Nash could not see her face.

" I said to Canning, ' Now look for the woman that robbed you '; she immediately pointed to Mary Squires, and said: ' That old woman in the corner was the woman that robbed me.' "

Whereupon Lucy Squires said to her mother: " Do you hear what the gentlewoman says ? she says you robbed her." And old Mary got up and said: " Madam, do you say I robbed

you ? Pray, madam, look at this face; and sure, if you have once seen it before, you must have remembered it, for God Almighty, I think, never made such another; pray, Madam, when do you say I robbed you ? " Elizabeth answered: " It was on the first day of this new year." " The first day of this new year, Madam, do you say ? Lord bless me ! I was a hundred and twenty miles from this place then."

" I with my finger tapped her on the shoulder, and said: ' Dame, where was you ? ' She replied: ' I was at Abbotsbury in Dorsetshire, and there are a hundred people I can bring to prove it, and some of them have known me twenty, thirty, and forty years.' "

And then Nash says that about twenty people in the room were saying: " She has been here but a very little time." We are not told who these people were, with the exception of Judith Natus, who, according to Nash, said she had herself been there ten or eleven weeks, and that she had never seen Canning there before, and added that the gipsy had only been there a very little while. Then Elizabeth Canning was taken the tour of the house, and when she came to the hayloft she said " she believed that was the room." And then her friends showed her a pitcher and she said yes, that was the pitcher that she drank from; and a gentleman showed her a tobacco-mould, and, yes, she remembered that; and she was shown three saddles and she thought she remembered one of them; but she could not remember " the nest of drawers." Then somebody asked why she hadn't tried to get out of

the window that was not boarded up; and her reply was that " she thought it had been fastened "—which seems weak. And Judith Natus was saying that she and her husband were sleeping in the hayloft for ten and eleven weeks, and, indeed, Judith had been " taken " that very morning lying on the bed made of hay and sacking; but nobody seems to have paid the slightest attention to what Judith said.

Then Mr. Nash was asked what he meant by not coming forward and saying all this when Mary Squires was being tried for her life. He answered, firstly, that he did not believe anybody could be condemned by such evidence; and, secondly, that the day of the trial was a very busy day with him, since there was a great feast at Goldsmiths' Hall, and he, as butler to the company, was responsible for the safety of three or four thousand pounds' worth of plate.

The next witness was John Hague, a goldsmith and a friend of Mr. Nash; he was one of the Nash party to Enfield Wash on 1st February. He saw Mr. Adamson and Mr. Scarrat tossing a halfpenny as to which should go to meet Elizabeth Canning, and he saw the triumphant return of Adamson, secure in Elizabeth's recollection of a little hay. He saw Canning, brought into the kitchen where she said her stays had been taken from her, he saw her placed in full view of the stairs leading to the loft where—as she said a little later—she had been imprisoned. But, according to Mr. Hague, though she sat in the kitchen between a quarter

of a hour and twenty minutes, she said not a word either of stays or of prison.

Mr. Hague describes the identification in the parlour. He did not think that Elizabeth Canning could see the gipsy's face, as she sat by the hearth. He did not remember hearing Judith Natus or anybody else making any remark about the length of time the gipsy had been at Enfield. Mr. Hague was one of the two people who supported Elizabeth in her exploration of the house, and when the girl came into the hayloft:

" This is the room," says she, " that I was confined in." Then her mother said:

" Aye, this is the room where my poor child was confined in." Said I: " Good woman, were you confined there with her ? " " No," says she, " but I believe anything my daughter says."

Mr. Hague had a great deal to say about the condition of the room, its nastiness, its growth of filthy cobwebs that showed that nothing had been moved for months. Elizabeth had said there were pictures over the chimney opening. In fact, there was an old iron casement, glued to the wall with cobwebs, and when it was moved away " there appeared a print of it, that looked as if it had been there a year or two." And Mr. Hague asked her why she did not try to get out of the window, and she replied that she thought it was nailed, but the witness could see no marks to show that there had been nails. And then Mr. Hague found that the door leading into the loft had no lock, nor any trace of a lock ever having been on it; and he went so far

as to say: "Zounds, child, I cannot think you were ever here at all." To which Elizabeth Canning made no reply.

And then Counsel put to Mr. Hague the question that he put to Mr. Nash: "You were convinced that the girl was a liar, and, therefore, that the gipsy was innocent: why did you not come forward at the gipsy's trial and tell what you knew?"

And Mr. Hague's reply was a singularly feeble one; he had not even a Goldsmiths' feast to put forward in mitigation.

"I was in Court all the while, and I'll give my reasons why. When they were first taken up, Canning said Virtue Hall was one of the girls that stood by when her stays were taken off; at the same time Virtue Hall, with all seeming innocency, laughed in her face, and said: 'God forgive you, Madam, I never saw you in this house in my life' . . . Seeing such seeming innocence in her there, and when in Court to hear her swearing such a thing I thought to be false as the Gospel is true, I protest that I had no power to speak; I believed she was perjured in all she said; that is the whole reason why I did not speak; but had I had spirits, I would have spoke."

This is not convincing. There is not much doubt as to the real reason of Hague's silence. The Canning fever was at the mad height of its delirium, the mob were furiously for Canning, and the London mob of the seventeen-fifties was a terrible thing: Hague and Nash were frightened out of their lives. They thought

that if they gave evidence against the mob's saint they would be stoned to death outside the Old Bailey; and I do not think that their fears were unreasonable.

Next comes Mr. Aldridge, a silversmith, and another of the Nash excursion to Enfield Wash. He said that when Elizabeth Canning was brought into the kitchen, " she looked about as if she did not know where she was." And there follows a slightly varying account of the identification scene in Mother Wells's parlour.

" I was with her when she was carried into the parlour: as soon as we had taken her in there, Mother Wells came to her, and said: " Madam, do you know me ? ' ' No,' said she, ' I do not know that ever I saw you in my life before.' Then George Squires came up and said: ' Madam, do you know me ? ' She said, ' No, I don't know that I ever saw you in my life; it was that old woman in the corner that cut my stays off.' "

For the rest; Mr. Aldridge corroborates Mr. Hague and Mr. Nash in all main particulars. He observes a little for himself; he examines the wall under the window whence Canning was supposed to have escaped, and " there was no sign of clawing the wall or anything." On the whole, Mr. Aldridge was decidedly of opinion that Elizabeth Canning was " mistaken."

And for the third time: " How came you not to appear as a witness for Squires at her trial ? "

Mr. Aldridge did a little better than Mr. Hague. Firstly, he was not subpœnaed, and

then he could not stay in Court very long, as he was going to the famous feast at Goldsmiths' Hall.

"Did Mr. Lyon and you all return very good friends?"

"They went before Justice Tashmaker, and I was quite tired of the thing. I went to an alehouse and got some mutton chops and half a pint of wine: I thought it was not worth hearing."

A very business-like account of the proceedings of 1st February was then given by William White, the officer charged with the warrant to apprehend Susannah Wells.

"The warrant went down before me: I met three gentlemen there with the warrant: I apprehended it was to take up Mother Wells, for cutting off Elizabeth Canning's stays: I went over the way to a public-house; then somebody said they saw Mother Wells go by; then I said: 'Let us go over and secure everybody in the house: there were four of us, Mr. Adamson, Mr. Wintlebury, I and another person whom I do not know: we went there: when we were in the parlour, Mr. Adamson pointed to Mother Wells, and said: 'That is she'; there were two or three other women in the room with her. I immediately drawed my hanger, and said they were all prisoners. I put a sentry over them, and went to the other parts of the house, and took all that were in the house, and put them into the parlour: Mother Squires and her two daughters were in a fore room up one pair of stairs: George Squires was brought into the

room by some of the people: I told him he must be detained. ' Gentlemen,' said he, ' look over everything that I have here.' I turned them all out, and the old and young women's things too, to look for the stays, but no such thing was found."

V

White, the officer of the Lord Mayor's Court, continued his story of his search through the house. He found one of Mother Wells's daughters and Virtue Hall, and swept them into his net in the parlour. Then he went into the kitchen, and peered about him, and, "looking over the door through a chasm," saw a woman's head. This was the head of Judith Natus, no doubt aroused by the tumult and confused noise, who had just got up. She, too, took her place in the parlour. Then the officer walked up into the loft and took a general observation of it.

"When I had looked round the room, I was a little surprised and thought the girl was mistaken; so I went out on the outside, and looked under the window that fronts the road, the north window; I could not observe anything particular there, neither the footsteps of anybody dropping from the window, or print of their clothes by dropping down; it was clay ground; it was so soft that the step of a dog might make an impression. There was a heap of human dung lay under it, about as high as the body of a quart bottle; there was no appearance of anybody being there for some time; neither did it appear to me as if anybody had been out of that window: I called Mr. Adamson to show him; he would have persuaded me there were some

scratches on the wall with her foot, but I could not see any."

And then Mr. White's evidence clears up an interesting point. When Miss Canning arrived " it was proposed "—the name of the proposer is not stated—that the prisoners should be brought one at a time into the kitchen:

" I objected against that, and desired they would all go back again into the parlour, and let Canning go in and pick the woman out from among them all that had robbed her; I was afraid somebody would go and give a signal; then we went into the parlour; they were all placed in a circle round the fire; I believe before they were moved, Mary Squires was on the left-hand side of the fire; Wells sat with her elbow against the fireplace, on the right-hand side; this was before they got up to come in one at a time; after this their positions were most of them altered; and when Canning came in, which could not be above a minute or two after, upon some occasion, Wells was shifted and got into Squire's side, and Squires in her place."

And then Canning came in and identified the old gipsy instantly, the bent, crouched figure, black bonnetted, sitting by the fire: and the officer says, significantly: " I saw her fix her eye immediately on that corner of the room "—as if she had been told exactly where to look. A few minutes before, Susannah Wells would have been in that corner of the room; that Mother Wells of whom Mr. Scarrat had suspicions from the very first. " The Hertford road," said he, when broken Elizabeth came back to her

mother's, " I'll wager a guinea to a farthing she has been at Mother Wells's."

The next witness was the labouring man, the oddly-named Fortune Natus, who lodged with his wife at Mother Wells's, occupying together the bed of hay with a sacking bolster, that has been mentioned already. He testified that he took up his lodging at Mother Wells's, " the Monday fortnight after my Lord Mayor's day " —about the 23rd November 1752. He describes the famous room, the alleged prison of Elizabeth Canning, with minute care, specifying one by one, all the odds and ends of dirty lumber which should have been impressed vividly on Elizabeth's mind, but, somehow, were not so impressed. One bit of lumber is notable; this was " the sign of the Crown," almost at the foot of Natus's bed, which was bought by Ezra Whiffin in January 1753.

" How do you know that he bought it ? "

" Because he has now got it hanging up at his door."

Fortune Natus knew nothing of Elizabeth Canning; he only caught a glimpse of her at Justice Tashmaker's—the prisoners were brought before this magistrate at Edmonton, on the morning of their arrest. He had never seen her at Mrs. Wells's house. Fortune Natus had escaped the hurly-burly of 1st February. He had gone to his work, early enough, no doubt, in the morning, leaving his wife on their miserable bed. The witness remembered, vaguely, as he confessed, not exactly, the date on which the gipsy family came to lodge at Mrs.

Wells's: it was "about a week and a day before they were taken up."

"Have you any particular reason for remembering the time of the gipsy's coming to Wells's house?"

"I am in no ways exact to the day, but by reason she looked so frightful, that I did not care to be at the fire with her."

Then some details as to Natus's place of origin, which was Gloucestershire, his being hired first of all by a farmer at Waltham Cross, and how he could not get a constant lodging at Waltham Cross, and so came to Mother Wells's and paid ninepence a week; and as to the habits of the establishment:

"The family generally go to bed betwixt nine and ten o'clock; I never knew any harm by the house; the people that belong to the house have got a very bad character; but from what I know of it, I never saw any harm in it; and it is a very sober, honest house; I never saw any ill tricks, or irregularity, all the time I was there."

And, to sum up; Fortune Natus had slept on the miserable bed, in the dirty loft, all through the month of January 1753, and he was entirely sure that Elizabeth Canning had never been there, the whole of that month.

Then the question that had been asked three times before:

"Were you here upon the trial of Mary Squires?"

"I had a subpœna, and did come, and was in the Old Bailey yard, and up near the door."

" What prevented your coming into Court to give evidence ? "

" Because I was not called; none of the witnesses were called, never a one."

" Was there any other reason ? "

" No other reason, but they were not called."

" Were you not assaulted ? "

" I was at the place that turns out of the Old Bailey yard, three or four times, and I showed my subpœna."

" Who assaulted you ? "

" There was a tallish man that kept the gate, pitted very much with the smallpox, he was the only person that turned me out of the yard."

Whence it would appear that the very officers of the Court were either infected with the Canning delirium, or, more probably, heavily bribed by Elizabeth's friends to keep out all witnesses averse from the great cause of purity.

Judith Natus, wife of Fortune, deposed to her husband and herself moving from Waltham Cross—" because we were very poor "—to Mrs. Wells's of Enfield Wash. Very vague, Judith Natus could not tell the day of the month when their residence at Enfield Wash began, could not even tell what the month was—" because I am no scholar "—but was sure that it was before New Christmas Day. Very likely, because that was one of the very few days of the year on which she tasted meat, poor creature. And then, speaking of the odds and ends of the loft, she is asked about the chest of drawers:

" There was a nest of drawers, which I used

to put my bread and cheese in, because the mice should not run away with the cheese."

And Judith mentioned another old sign that stood in the room: the sign of the Fountain; though, according to Judith, it stood beside the sign of the Crown. She remembered Mr. Whiffin buying this latter sign before Old Christmas, and his buying the irons appurtenant "a week or a fortnight before we were taken up, as nigh as I can guess."

"How long had Mrs. Squires lodged there before she was taken up?"

"She had lodged there a week and one day." . . . .

"Look at that young woman (meaning Elizabeth Canning), did you ever see her at Mrs. Wells's?"

"I never did, before she came with them to take us up, if that was the last word I was to speak."

Judith Natus was taken with the rest before the Edmonton Justice, and, in her words, "Canning cleared me; she said she never saw me before."

Then Mary Larner, keeper of a chandler's shop at Enfield Wash: purveyor of bread, butter, cheese and beer to Mrs. Wells and her lodgers; living, in fact, over the way. Mary Larner remembered the gipsies coming: "it was on a Wednesday; and the Thursday was se'nnight after, in the morning, they were taken up." George and Lucy would come to Mary Larner's and buy things from her, and sometimes "the old gentlewoman" came for tobacco: "the

very morning they were taken up they had tea" —an expensive luxury in 1753. Mrs. Larner is asked about something Mrs. Wells said: the cautious Mr. Nares, counsel for Elizabeth Canning, promptly objects on Stareleigh principles, and the Court upholds him. And this is very curious:

Mr. Morton (cross-examining for Eliazbeth Canning): "Did you ever see any gipsies there before?"

"No, never before that time to my knowledge: I never saw any at Mrs. Wells's before. I was very much surprised, and put the money I took of her into a pail of water, because I had heard they can get the money again."

And Mrs. Larner made a distinction: Lucy Squire's money she put into her pocket; it was old Mary's coin that went into the pail; I suppose because the old woman looked so perfectly the part of the witch, of Mother Shipton.

Sarah Howit said she was daughter to Susannah Wells, and it may be concluded that it was her father who had the misfortune to be hanged, as Mrs. Wells confessed at her trial. She was born, she said, at the house at Enfield Wash, and had lived there most of her life. She said that Fortune Natus and his wife had lodged with her mother a great while before the gipsies came, and that they had slept in the loft all through the month of January; furthermore, that there never had been a lock on the door which led from the kitchen to the loft, that she and Virtue Hall were in the loft almost every day, that she remembered how she and Virtue

Hall opened the window—the unboarded window—and talked to Edward Allen, Giles Knight and John Larner, who were lopping trees just outside; and this about the 8th of January.

Mr. Recorder examined this witness as to Elizabeth Canning's identification of Mary Squires.

" Do you remember Elizabeth Canning being brought into the parlour ? "

" I do."

" Recollect what passed there."

" She swore to the gipsy woman, and did not see her face."

" Are you sure of that ? "

" She had never seen her face; she swore to her before she had seen her face; I am sure of it. . . . She (the gipsy) was sat with her pipe in her mouth, by the fireside, with a hat and cloak on, with her hand upon her knee."

Mr. Larner, bricklayer and husband to Mary, of the general shop, was in the interlude of the tree-lopping, outside the house of Mrs. Wells. He was in company with Edward Allen and Giles Knight, near the house of Susannah Wells, on 8th January 1753. Giles Knight was the lopper and told Larner that he might have the lops, if he would come over: " When we were there, Edward Allen flung some dust into the window of the workshop near the trees, to Sal Howit and Virtue Hall, who were within-side." And then there was a little conversation between the men outside and the girls inside; but, unfortunately, Larner couldn't remember a word

of it. This, I think, is a pity, since I am sure the talk was of the lively kind. Elizabeth's counsel wanted to know how Larner was so sure as to the date: "Because," Larner answered, "the arms of the trees that I carried home set my chimney on fire on the 10th, and I christened my child on the 12th, and Mrs. Wells was at my house at the christening."

Giles Knight, gardener, of Enfield, corroborates Larner. He knew that the day of the lopping was 8th January, because "it was the Monday after Old Christmas Day"; and is, further, more certain of the date, "because Mrs. Picket had a cart loaded with chalk, broke down on Old Christmas Day, but it came home that day." Giles Knight, like John Larner, had forgotten what passed between the girls at the window and the men without. In the same lamentable state of ignorance was Edward Allen of Enfield Highway, costermonger, also hedger and ditcher. It was he who threw the "chumps of dirt" up at the window.

The local publican, John Cantril, has his say. Knight and Allen came to his house on Monday, 8th January: "They said they had done but an indifferent day's work, for they had been at play with Mother Wells's daughter, out at the back window, throwing clods of dirt at the casement, and they had been lopping of trees, and a-hedging." Mr. Cantril fixed the date by the fact that Knight and Allen had their breakfast at his house, and asked if he had any "small meat": "I said I should roast a large piece on the morrow, which I did, it being the

9th, I seldom roast less than five stone, to give my customers for Christmas beef." Cantril's first sight of the gipsy was on the morning she was taken up, when she came into his house to light her pipe; he had seen her son George the Wednesday before: " He came into my house very sharply, and said: ' Let's have a half-pennyworth of gin ' "—about the quantity contained in a modern " double," as I conjecture.

Another publican, Ezra Whiffin, of the " White Hart and Crown," Enfield Wash, testified as to the sign of the Crown, and the sign-irons, and the piece of wood to which these irons were attached, with some degree of confusion, as his evidence reads to-day. However, this emerges: he had heard that Mrs. Wells had some old sign-irons, so he went up with her to the loft with the hay in it; and there was Judith Natus on the wretched bed, covered with a sheet. And as Mr. Whiffin was poking about in the hay, looking for the irons, " Mrs. Wells said. ' Now I recollect myself, it lies under the feet of this poor creature's bed ': we looked and found them in a piece of wood there. Then Fortune Natus's wife raised herself up upon her elbow, and said: ' What are you going to do ? ' or ' What are you about ? ' " The date of the transaction was 18th January; the date was fixed by certain moneys owed by Mr. Whiffin, by a joint note, executed by himself and a Mr. Livingstone, by the fact of his arrest for the debt on 8th January: the said note produced and exhibited and all confirmed by Alexander Livingstone.

Elizabeth Long was once a Miss Wells: she lived three houses from her mother's house; she was in and out of her mother's house all through the month of January: often went into the hayloft to fetch Judith Natus to work for her: saw her and her husband in bed in the loft during the month of January; had never seen Elizabeth Canning till the great morning of the taking-up. Mary Squires, she declared, was at her mother's house a week and a day before the arrest. Mrs. Long was another of the witnesses intimidated at the Old Bailey, during the trial of Mary Squires.

" I came into the Old Bailey yard, and the people would not let me come in. . . . Somebody knowed me to be Mother Wells's daughter and they pushed me out, and would not let me come in; they frightened me very much, and I went back again . . . and heard the mob cry out, ' Mother Wells's daughter ! ' "

Testimony from John Howit, Mrs. Wells's son, to the fact that he had seen Fortune Natus and his wife lying in bed, " or what *they* call a bed," in the loft on 20th January; testimony of Robert White, a friend of Natus's, to the effect that he used to talk with Natus in the Wells's kitchen, in the month of January, and had often seen Fortune Natus and Judith going up the stairs to the loft and coming down the stairs from the loft. Then a technical witness gave the dimensions of the loft from his survey of it: " thirty-five foot, three inches and a-half, from quarter to quarter in the inside of the room upon the floor, by nine foot eight inches ": in fact a

distinctly long, narrow room, not a small, square room, as wretched Elizabeth had at first averred.

Then, more technical evidence, of a delicate nature. Elizabeth Mayle said she was a midwife: " I brought this girl, Elizabeth Canning, into the world, and laid her mother of more children; I am intimately acquainted with the family."

Mr. Davy: " Were you at Mrs. Canning's house in February last twelvemonth ? "

" I was, in the beginning of February; I saw the mother and the daughter also."

" Can you mention the day ? "

" It was the 2nd or 3rd; it was the first week, I am sure."

" Where does she live ? "

" She lives in Aldermanbury Postern; the daughter was then lying in a bed in her mother's house."

" Had you any conversation with the mother, in the daughter's presence, about the daughter's misfortunes ? "

" I had."

" Was the daughter awake ? "

" She was: I had business by the house, and I went in to inquire if she had heard of her daughter Elizabeth. As soon as I came in, Mrs. Canning said: ' Madam ! O Lord, madam ! have you heard of my misfortune ? ' I said I had read it in the newspapers in the month of January, and asked her if she had heard of her daughter; she said, ' Yes, she has come home as naked as she was born.' "

—Mrs. Canning must have forgotten the famous bedgown.—

" Are you sure she mentioned these words, ' naked as she was born ? ' "

" I am positive of it: I immediately said, ' O Lord ! what, without a shift on ? ' She said, ' No, she had a shift on ! ' Then I asked her where her daughter was. She said, behind me. I turned about to the girl, and said, ' Lord bless me ! Bet, how came this about ? ' "

Bet tells her story from Moorfields onwards. Mrs. Mayle hopes the men did not use her ill, " so as to debauch you." Bet said she could not tell, for she had her fits.

" I said to her mother: ' Mrs. Canning, have you got this shift your child went abroad in ? Sure never was such a case before.' I said: ' I'll tell you if anybody has debauched your child, if you'll let me see it.' She immediately reached it, and I looked at it, and said: ' Mrs. Canning, is this the shift your daughter went away in ? ' She said, ' Yes.' Then I said I supposed it was washed since she had been gone: she said, ' No, how could that be ? for she was in a room where nobody came to her.' "

Mr. Morton: " Was the prisoner present and heard all this ? "

" She was. We stood by her bedside. . . . I said: ' I think the stuff is too clean, except you have had it washed since she came home.' She said, no, it had not been washed. I said: ' Then, my dear, you may make yourself easy, for I can see by it that no man has debauched your child; but it is uncommonly clean to be worn so long

. . . but I can assure you no man has debauched your child in this shift unless it has been washed since.' She again said, no, it had not."

Mr. Davy: "Did the shift appear to be dirty enough to have been wore three weeks and some days?"

"No, it did not. . . . I don't think it was dirty enough to have been worn three weeks by any clean woman that ever sat still in a room, because every woman must go to bed and get up; and by sitting by the fire the dust will arise."

"Do you think it had been wore three weeks?"

"I don't think it had."

"Did you take notice of the bottom of it, whether it was dragged?"

"I did; I took particular notice of that; I saw no dirt there; there was a hole on the right side of the shift down one of the gussets, but there was no dragged tail, not at all."

"How long did it appear to have been wore?"

"It seemed as if it had been wore a week, or such a matter; I can't tell how long it had been wore . . . [her mother] said: 'Will you examine her body, to see if she has been hurted?' I said, 'No; I never was before the face of a judge in the Old Bailey in my life, and I don't care to be in dirty work.' Going away, she said to her little girl, 'Go and call Mrs. Woodward over the way to me': when she came in, Mrs. Canning said to me, 'Will you say what you said before?' I said, 'Yes, Mrs. Canning, with

all the pleasure in life; if this shift has not been washed, I'll make an oath before a judge, no man had copulation with her.' I went away; I had proposed to bring a doctor. I returned in about half an hour; I went to the bedside to the girl, and said: ' Bet, I was very sorry I did not ask you whether your feet were not very sore in walking barefoot ? ': she said, ' No, they are not; I had my shoes and stockings on, they did not take them from me.' This I look upon to be from the mother's agony of mind, that made her say she was come home naked. I said: ' What more had you on ? ' She said: ' My under-petticoat, and an old bedgown, which I found in a corner of the room. . . .' "

" Did the mother seem to be pleased or displeased at what you said ? "

" She fell down on her knees, and held up her hands, and said: ' Thank God, my daughter is not a whore ! ' "

More delicate discussions as to the condition of Elizabeth's shift. Mrs. Mayle called in at the Canning's a couple of days later, when two young women and an elderly woman, " a grave woman," as the midwife said, were present.

" I said, there was one thing in her favour, she had not been debauched; I said: ' Reach the shift to this gentlewoman '; I said: ' Let her judge the case and see that your child has not been debauched ': when that was reached out the old gentlewoman said, ' I don't see anything like it '; I said: ' Look over it well; do you think this has been worn three weeks and three days ? ' ' No,' says she, ' I don't think it

has, I don't think that is likely. . . .' Then Mrs. Canning said: 'Do you come here to set my other friends against me . . .'?"

"Was it observed that there were no marks of her being according to the course of other women?"

"The old gentlewoman mentioned it, and Mrs. Canning said her daughter had got cold, and had been out of order for three or four months."

Now it seems to me quite clear from Mrs. Mayle's evidence that she did not believe that the shift in which Elizabeth returned was the shift in which Elizabeth went away, the shift that she had worn for four weeks. And that means that she believed Mrs. Canning was deliberately lying to her; and so thought the grave gentlewoman, also, no doubt, an expert in shifts. Yet, when she was asked by Canning's counsel: "What is the mother?" she replies:

"She is a fine, likely woman as any, and a woman that I respect as much as any woman, and the girl too."

The case for the prosecution was now drawing to a close. The information sworn by Elizabeth Canning before Justice Fielding—the author of "Tom Jones"—was put in and read. This, it may be remembered, was the third of Elizabeth's informations; the second being sworn before Mr. Justice Tashmaker of Edmonton. The Fielding information covers the familiar ground; beginning with Uncle and Aunt Colley of Saltpetre Bank, going on to the two

men in brown bob wigs and drab-coloured great-coats, who seized Elizabeth opposite to Bethlehem Gate in Moorfields. Here, again, is the incident of the violent blow on the head dealt by one of the men, this blow producing a fit. And Elizabeth swears that her fits often last for six or seven hours; and again I wonder what sort of seizure this may be. And so on; with the rest of the story.

The next witness was Mr. Deputy Molineux, who was present at the Lord Mayor's inquiry, held after the first trial, that of Mary Squires. He is valuable on the incident of the bedgown, which Canning had sworn she had found in the grate of the room in which she had been held prisoner. Thus, Mr. Deputy:

" After my lord had concluded his examining of Virtue Hall he turned to Betty Canning, and asked her if she had anything to say. She said, no, she had nothing at all more than she had said upon the trial; my lord said nothing further to her; the bedgown and pitcher were on the table; Betty Canning was rolling up the bedgown, in order to take it away as I apprehended; my lord said: ' Child, you must not take that away, you must leave that with me '; upon which she replied, and said: ' It is my mother's '; it shocked me a good deal, because I had heard it said, that she came home in a bedgown, and that she found it in the room where she was confined."

And that was the end of Mr. Davy's case against the prisoner at the bar, Elizabeth Canning.

VI

The case for the prosecution ended, Mr. Morton rises for the defence and prologizes in a very flowing and impressive manner. It has been asked why Elizabeth Canning had used legal means to delay her trial; Mr. Morton gives reasons for the delay. He asks the jury whether a guilty woman would not have fled the country: " can anyone doubt, that such a delinquent would not have made her own choice of her place of exile, especially when by such choice she should have avoided the most severe part of her punishment, if guilty—that of slavery ? "

Next: the prosecution has urged that Elizabeth Canning's story is highly improbable. As to the circumstances of the alleged robbery in Moorfields; Mr. Davy, prosecuting, pointed out that this was too frequented a place, even between nine and ten o'clock at night, for deliberate robbery: Mr. Morton denies that the place was frequented at the hour indicated. And he indicates his theory as to the circumstance of the two rude men in bob wigs: " is it in the least incredible that those, who were either of Mrs. Wells's or Mrs. Squires's gang, should be desirous of adding one more prostitute to the retinue of this notorious bawd, or smuggling gipsy ? " And it had been urged that the gang at Mrs. Wells's house would have ascertained

by constant observation whether their prisoner was still safe. No doubt, replies Mr. Morton: and Elizabeth Canning says that she once observed someone peering into the room to see if she were there: " might not this observation through the crack be repeated a hundred times, and Canning not observe it ? "

Another point of improbability urged by the prosecution: " that Canning should return from the Wash without attempting to take any shelter till she reached her own house." On which Mr. Morton observes, and, as I think, very justly, that no one person has any business to say, " I wouldn't have done that; so, of course, nobody else could possibly have done it." And again—very well indeed, Mr. Morton !—" many very improbable things, many very incoherent ones, have happened "—and may happen again.

No doubt, there is a sense in which Bishop Butler was right in declaring probability to be the guide of life; but in the law courts the dictum must be held with grave cautions. Mr. Morton, I think, urged his objections to this part of Mr. Davy's pleadings justly. No one knows what he, she, or the other would do on escaping from an evil and, possibly, murderous gang: blind flight, without reason or consideration or weighing of the wiser way, is quite as probable as any other course.

But when Counsel passes to his next point; the ground begins to quake beneath him.

" That she gave a particular account of her absence on her return home, 29th January 1753 is not disputed."

It was very much disputed. Her first statement, as clearly as can be ascertained, came to this: that when she recovered consciousness after her six-hour fit, she found herself on a broad road with water by it; that she was shut up in a house from which she saw the Hertford coach go by. It was then that Mr. Scarrat wagered that she had been at Mother Wells's, it was after that wager that Elizabeth remembered having heard the name of Wells or Wills in the house. And then, Mr. Morton lays stress on the pitcher. What happened was this. Elizabeth said she had been imprisoned for four weeks. It was then the general belief that no human being could be deprived of all food and drink for twenty-eight days and continue to be alive. Elizabeth said there were pieces of mouldy bread on the floor: that was her food. Water would naturally be her drink, and a month's supply of water would have to be in a pitcher. Afterwards, Elizabeth is shown Mrs. Wells's pitcher, and naturally says: "That is the pitcher from which I drank." So Mr. Morton's: "But that she should descend to such a pitcher, as now produced, was risking the whole on a circumstance that would fail her a million to one": carries no conviction.

And why did not Canning describe the very extraordinary and unique ugliness of Mary Squires? Well, answers Mr. Morton, she was not so picturesque as Mr. Davy, but "her account of the person who robbed her is too remarkable to proceed from mere invention."

This will not do. Mary Squires, as everybody

agreed, was of a quite singular ugliness. She was hideously marked with scrofula. All that Elizabeth said in her first story was that she was robbed by a woman.

Then Counsel urges, very truly, that before the day of the visit to Enfield Wash, 1st February, the whole talk had been of Susannah Wells, as the person who was no doubt guilty. Scarrat had been sure of Wells from the first, from the mere mention of the Hertford road. "Everybody had predetermined Mother Wells to be the robber."—"Mr. Wills assures you, nobody dreamed of a gipsy—everybody had fixed on Wells, as she was known to be the mistress of the house, and as the house was infamously known to be capable of harbouring those that were capable of any villainy—and yet, gentlemen, the prosecutor's own witness, Mr. Aldridge, tells you that Squires was directly pitched on by Canning."

This is ingenious. But, it will be remembered, all the people who had been secured in that parlour, had been placed in certain positions. Among others, the gipsy had been sitting on one side of the fire, Mrs. Wells on the other. On a false alarm, everybody got up to go into the kitchen, where Elizabeth was, for identification. Then they sat down again; but Mary Squires and Susannah Wells changed places. Elizabeth came into the room a little later. The gipsy was crouching over the fire, smoking her pipe, all huddled up, with her face muffled in clouts. And in an instant, without pause or consideration, Elizabeth points to the place where

Susannah Wells had been sitting—and identifies the gipsy.

Mr. Morton then urges, and with force, that Canning was certainly missing for a month, that she returned in a miserable condition, quite consistent with her story, and that the prosecution, after all their inquiries pursued for more than a year, have not been able to find out where she was for that month—if she was not at Mother Wells's. " We have had no other account than Mr. Davy's bare opinion—she was secreted somewhere—to conceal a pregnancy—or to get free of disorders common to the gay and young." The point was well taken. Mr. Davy presented no evidence whatever to support his first hypothesis that Elizabeth Canning had gone into hiding to have a baby. And his second hypothesis: that she had been undergoing salivation, or mercurial treatment for syphilis, was declared to be impossible by a physician who saw Elizabeth soon after her return.

Next, Mr. Morton proceeds to attack the Squires' alibi; the evidence of the Dorsetshire witnesses who swore that Mary Squires was at Abbotsbury, near Dorchester, and not at Enfield Wash, Middlesex, on the morning of 2nd January 1753. He proceeds at first, as counsel often proceed, by hint, suggestion, insinuation: all perfectly legitimate devices, where a jury is to be influenced. For instance: Mary Squires sold smuggled goods, and her witnesses, or some of them, are described as " united by a long course of smuggling "; the insinuation being that one smuggler is like enough to commit

perjury for the sake of another. And then; Fortune Natus had said that the gipsy was so hideous that he did not like to sit with her by the fire: how is it, then, asks Mr. Morton, that at Abbotsbury the gipsies are treated as remarkable guests !

" Instead of being gipsies that everyone avoids, except such as went to deal in fortune-telling or smuggled goods, they are now companions of those of the best rank in the place, and at two balls in one week."

It is very well done indeed. But the " best rank in the place ": the keeper of the village shop, the publican, the drunken schoolmaster, the cobbler, and the deputy-exciseman: these were some of the best company; and there is every reason to suppose that some of them were interested in Mary Squires as a smuggler. And " balls ": hearty country dances in the tavern kitchen, the orchestra consisting of the village blacksmith with his fiddle.

Then Counsel for Elizabeth Canning hints that the change of style must be brought into account; country people were likely enough to be confused by the change. This is well put; but he forgets that the evidence of the deputy-exciseman was backed by the official books, which would not be liable to country confusions.

And now some very remarkable points. The gaps in George's memory; his inability to give any account of the gipsy pilgrimage before the critical dates required for the *alibi:* and as to the letter from his sister in London, hurrying the party back to town: why was that sister not called ?

" Is she of too weak an understanding as not to be trusted with this question: ' Did you write a letter to your brother George in January 1753, and to what place ? Was you then ill, and did you inform him so by such letter ? ' An answer in the affirmative to either of these questions from a witness whose character stands, and must stand, unimpeached by anything which now appears, would have had great weight, with me at least, in confirming this part of George's evidence."

A very just observation; and again we must acknowledge the force of Counsel's comments on that very singular gap in George Squires's account of the Abbotsbury-Enfield Wash itinerary: the four days' journey between Coombe, near Salisbury and Basingstoke; a distance of forty miles. Where were the gipsies between 14th January and 18th January ? As Mr. Morton puts it: " not a single place known; no witness called that ever saw them; and yet they ate, drank, and lodged as in other parts of their journey." This is a point that cannot be evaded: and the only explanation I can give is the suggestion which I made before: that though Mary Squires did not rob Elizabeth Canning of her stays on 2nd January, yet Mary Squires may have been engaged in some very dubious enterprises between 14th January and 18th January.

And as to the letter, written by the Basingstoke landlady on behalf of Lucy Squires to her lover, William Clarke, cobbler of Abbotsbury. It is essential, Mr. Morton urges,

" that the letter should, beyond a doubt, appear to you to be wrote on the 18th of January 1753."

" But, gentlemen, you, on oath, must, from the appearance of the letter itself, think this uncertain, for, however often the date has been repeated 1753, it, in fact, has no other figures than 175; the corner, where the fourth figure should stand, is torn or rubbed off. That corner alone, gentlemen, out of four, though all equally secured by the fold and make of the letter, has suffered by time. When an obliteration, or other accident, happens in so material a part of so very material a piece of evidence, it naturally excites some suspicion."

Very forcible indeed; excellently urged. But; Mary Morris, of the " Spread Eagle " at Basingstoke, was quite certain that she had written the letter for Lucy Squires on 18th January; and there was no suggestion that she was a whole year out in her calculations. In fact she said that the old woman, Mary Squires, had lodged at the " Spread Eagle " " about a year and three-quarters before "; but that she had never seen George or Lucy before this visit on which the letter was written. And, as to the other witnesses to the *alibi*, Mr. Morton suggests that they may have sworn falsely, and—gliding very subtly from the subjunctive to the indicative—" this invalidates the whole of this [evidence] as relative to, or material in, a proof of Canning's guilt." It is undoubtedly true that *alibi* evidence, like all evidence, may be false; undoubtedly true, again, that false evidence proves nothing:

but Mr. Morton skilfully forgets the real *elenchus*, the point at issue. He seems to assume the falsity of the *alibi* witnesses; he forgets that it is for him to prove their falsity.

But this Mr. Morton can by no means do, or anything like this. It will be remembered that the Dorsetshire evidence was in itself a heap of triviality, a mass of country recollections of bell-ringers who think they will put a little something in their jug of cider, of boiled fowls for dinner, of a dead horse by the roadside, of an excise-man's buttered toast for breakfast, of somebody else's roast mutton for dinner; all these trifles being linked to days and dates in the country memory. But in this mass of small stuff, Mr. Morton can only find one flaw; old Mary Squires's walk from Abbotsbury and back again; which, he declares, is improbable in the time allowed for it. This is not much; it is no essential link in the chain. After all Counsel's ingenuity and admirable pleading, giving due weight to George Squires's very odd memory, to that highly suspicious blank between Coombe and Basingstoke, to the non-production of Mary Squires, the sick sister in London, who is supposed to have written to her relatives in Dorset: yet at last we feel convinced that the gipsies were at Abbotsbury and not at Enfield Wash on 2nd January. If this were not so; then we must suppose a conspiracy extending from Abbotsbury to Coombe to save a gipsy from being hanged, this conspiracy comprehending people who had never seen each other or heard of each other. Here, I think, we may appeal justly to the test

of improbability, and declare that there is a certain line past which the theoretical improbable becomes the practical impossible.

The next branch of Mr. Morton's defence relates to the accounts given by Elizabeth Canning of her misadventure, whether before the magistrates or in conversation. The alleged contradictions have to be explained away, and Counsel puts forward the general proposition that "a general fact, compounded of a variety of things done and said, when related on particular occasions, and at different times, has not always been minutely and exactly related the same way." And, to come to particulars, Mr. Morton has a good deal to say as to the conduct of Messrs. Nash, Hague, and Aldridge, who stated, as we know, that they were convinced by their visit to Enfield Wash on 1st February that Elizabeth Canning lied; and yet did not come forward at the trial of Mary Squires to give evidence in the gipsy's defence. They were cowards, no doubt, as I have said; but their cowardice proves nothing and infers nothing as to the guilt or innocence of Mary Squires or Elizabeth Canning. And so Mr. Morton concludes his long address for the prisoner, mentioning the fact that he intends to call a number of witnesses from the Enfield Wash district who remember seeing Mary Squires in that part from the end of December 1752 onwards. It is a most able speech; it seizes with wonderful force on the weak points in the gipsy's *alibi:* but, it will be noted, it makes no attempt to grapple with the glaring contradictions in

Elizabeth Canning's various statements. It is true enough that if you tell a story several times each version will have its variations: in one version this will be omitted, that inserted; in another, that will be omitted, this inserted, and, likely enough, some entirely new circumstance added. But a long, narrow, light room cannot be called a version of a square dark room: and a bedgown stolen from Enfield Wash could not be the property of Mrs. Canning of Aldermanbury. And no one need lie on bare boards in a room containing half a load of hay.

Mr. Nares also addressed the jury on behalf of Elizabeth Canning. He laid great stress on the affair of Virtue Hall. She, it will be remembered, was said by Elizabeth Canning to be one of the girls who were present in Mrs. Wells's kitchen, when Mary Squires stole the stays; the other girl being Lucy Squires. At the first trial, Virtue Hall turned King's Evidence and corroborated the Canning story in all particulars. At the inquiry before the Lord Mayor she withdrew the whole of her evidence, declaring it to be false. Henry Fielding, magistrate and author of "Tom Jones," spoke of this circumstance as the apostasy of Virtue Hall. And Mr. Nares had a great deal to say about the matter. And, in the first place, he asks what influence could be used "by the poor prisoner" [Elizabeth Canning] and her poor relations "to make Virtue Hall give her first evidence, if it were all false." Well, the supposition of the time was that Virtue was afraid of being tried as an accessory to the felony

of Mary Squires, and turned King's Evidence to save herself.

Then Mr. Nares makes a brief digression. He is of opinion that when anyone has been found guilty, then he should stay guilty; that no circumstances should influence those in authority to re-open a case which has been closed.

"Such inquiries into the guilt or innocence of a prisoner, after they have been legally convicted, are vastly inconvenient and improper; and though prosecutions of this nature [he means the prosecution of Elizabeth Canning] may show kindness to particulars, yet they may be attended with cruelty to mankind in general, as they tend to interrupt, at least, if not overturn, that common course of justice, that the wisdom of this kingdom, in all ages, has established; and may, and must serve to intimidate and prevent numbers of people from commencing prosecutions to endeavour to bring the guilty to punishment, lest by some strange alteration of affairs, they themselves may, in their turn, be prosecuted."

And, again, as to Virtue Hall: why did the prosecution not call her? The prosecution had said that Virtue having confessed herself a perjurer, her evidence would be valueless. Mr. Nares contests this view; declares that Virtue Hall would certainly have been a proper witness; and that it is a hardship to the prisoner that she has not been called, for:

"The prisoner may, by this means, be deprived of an opportunity of showing the Court

HENRY FIELDING

the methods that were used to bring about this recantation. . . . And, gentlemen, I am instructed to say, and have many witnesses in my brief to prove these instructions, that Virtue Hall's recantation was brought about in a very extraordinary manner: she was called upon in public to declare whether what she had sworn at the trial was true or false. And though I doubt not but that the magistrate meant well by it, yet, when called upon thus publicly to make recantation, what did she say? She declared openly, all she had sworn was truth. She was asked the same question again, and she made the same answer; upon which somebody or other suggested, it would be proper to take her in private. For God's sake! Why in private? I am sure by the knowledge I have of the worshipful magistrate [the Lord Mayor of London, 1752-53], he could never intend to seduce her by rewards or promises; but this may be the case; the poor girl might weakly imagine, that if she altered her evidence, she might have some rewards, though the strict justice of the magistrate never could or would have given her the least foundation for such a belief. . . . After she had been examined in private she did return and made the recantation. But if she did make that recantation, why does she not come here, and swear and avow it?"

And so on, and so on; but not to very much purpose or conviction of anything in particular. If Virtue Hall swore falsely in the first place, it was to save her own skin: so all theories as to the improbability of her turning on her friend

and patron, Mrs. Wells, are nothing to the purpose.

I think that one of the chief impressions to be obtained from this extraordinary trial, is that of the utter falsity of general principles, themselves often highly questionable, as applied to particular cases. And so I am entirely with Mr. Nares when he goes on to say that the plea of the prosecution: "Elizabeth Canning's story is highly improbable; therefore, it is a lie": won't do at all. I believe that the story was a lie; not because it is improbable, but because it was vitiated by contradictions, and because it was rebuked by the evidence of the men of Dorset. But here we go again in the general principle track:

"Mr. Davy has said"—Mr. Nares proceeds—"that no person living, nay, human nature itself is not capable of such cruelty as that of putting another person to pain merely through wantonness. And I have seen an expression of a very great writer to that purpose, though in other terms: 'There is no man upon earth so wicked, as to play the platonic with damnation.' Let us consider how far that principle is applicable to the prisoner at the bar. There is a maxim never controverted: 'Nemo repente fuit turpissimus.' I may safely say, no person leaped from exceeding good to exceeding bad in a moment; it takes up a great deal of time to get rid of that natural modesty, which every person is endued with, a man must go by steps to the pitch of wickedness."

And then follows the expected conclusion: Elizabeth Canning had always borne an excel-

lent character: therefore she could never have given false evidence against Squires, an absolute stranger.

Really, Mr. Nares—and really, Mr. Davy, also! No person is capable of giving pain "merely through wantonness"—otherwise for the fun of the thing. Rubbish! There are hundreds, thousands of such people in every society: every public school has its specimens of this kind, called bullies. The love of giving pain for the mere sake of giving pain is one of the commonest propensities of human nature; it is even present, occasionally, in people who are, otherwise, excellent. And no man plays the platonic with—trifles with, would be, I suppose, our idiom—damnation? Rubbish, again. It is one of the chief amusements of humanity to trifle with terrors, and dangers and evils of all sorts: physical, moral, mental, spiritual. And the worst rubbish of all is the old tag to the effect that no one becomes very bad suddenly. It would, probably, be not difficult to make a list of "murderers in a moment"; of men perfectly worthy, amiable, even devout, who have been driven to a sudden frenzy of uncontrollable rage and have struck, and have struck to kill.

Consequently: though Elizabeth Canning had always borne an excellent character, there is no reason to conclude from that circumstance that she was incapable of perjury. Stated barely, Mr. Nares's proposition refutes itself: Elizabeth Canning cannot be shown to have done anything wrong up to 1st January 1753; therefore it is quite impossible that she could have done a very

grievous wrong on 1st February 1753. But it is not always in the interests of Counsel to state propositions barely.

To facts once more. Mr. Nares urges, and with truth, that from the evening of Elizabeth Canning's return to the morning of the identification, it was the name of Mrs. Wells that was iterated and reiterated. We have seen how Mr. Scarrat fixed on Mrs. Wells from the very first by some mysterious system of his own; we have seen how Mr. Alderman Chitty granted a warrant for the apprehension of Mrs. Wells, though he couldn't exactly say why; we have seen how his court seemed to echo with anonymous voices which uttered the name of Mrs. Wells, though Elizabeth said, when she was first asked by the Alderman about this matter, that she knew of no name. Perfectly true: " everybody " seemed quite sure that Mrs. Wells was the culprit. Then, says Mr. Nares, how came Elizabeth Canning to identify Mary Squires at once, without a moment's pause ? How came she to refuse, absolutely, to identify Mrs. Wells, declaring that she had never seen her ?

" That very person, who had been thus pointed out to her, and whom she with safety and impunity might have accused; if she had had any scheme or design of injuring anyone, she totally acquits of the fact of robbing her."

Latet anguis in herba. No *person* had been pointed out to Elizabeth Canning: it was a *name*, the name of Susannah Wells, that had been pointed out to her. Her original story had been that she was pushed into a kitchen in

which there were three people: " an old woman, and two young ones." On this she was told by Scarrat that the old woman was, no doubt, a Mrs. Wells. It is clear, therefore, that there was only room for one old woman in the later developments of the tale. There was no place in it for a second villainness of mature years. Now, as we have seen, the batch of prisoners in Mrs. Wells's parlour were set in a certain order: Mrs. Wells on one side of the fire, Mary Squires on the other. A few minutes before the entrance of Elizabeth, the gipsy and Susannah Wells changed places—and when Elizabeth came in she identified the old woman who occupied the place vacated by Susannah Wells shortly before. And I have no doubt that she believed that she was identifying Mrs. Wells.

To continue the considerations of Mr. Nares. The prosecution, he says, have hinted that the whole story was a scheme between Elizabeth and her mother to raise contributions, so that the Canning family might live at ease. He has no difficulty in overthrowing this hypothesis. You do not, he says in effect, bring yourself to the verge of death—there is no doubt that Elizabeth was in a very bad way on the night of her return—on the off-chance that well-to-do people may get up a subscription for you. Mr. Nares has soon done with that foolish suggestion, and makes great play with the evidence of George Squires, which indeed, has many weak points in it. But then, again, he fails in his criticism of the general mass of what may be called the Dorsetshire evidence.

" But this observation may be made as to the number of witnesses that have been examined that, wherever a story is talked of by one or two people, and they have declared that they have seen Mary Squires the gipsy, and that they were acquainted with her, another person, to whom it is related, recollects he hath seen the same gipsy; and being told that they must be the same, would not anybody be persuaded, in almost half a year's time, that they must mean the same person ? When the centre is moved, there is a circle succeeds, and spreads from man to man; but supposing the first to be deceived, all the rest might depend upon his credit."

It is a possibility, of course, that this should be so; but somehow we reject the vague possibility in favour of the very tangible and solid alehouse keepers, fiddlers, bellringers, cobblers, and excisemen of the Dorsetshire villages. There is a superlogic that is beyond the formal and written laws of the science, and it is that superlogic which compels us to believe the Abbotsbury man who was quite clear that he had met the ugly old gipsy on a certain day; *because* his spit had just been refitted, and he was going to have his first roast of mutton from it on that very day. There is a Grammar of Assent that is yet to be written, and here is one of the examples that must find place in it.

In the next place Mr. Nares examines the evidence of Messrs. Nash and Aldridge and Hague; and says that two of them, at any rate, vacillated in their disbelief of Elizabeth Canning; and indeed we have seen that all three were

timid people, not the men to brave the fury of the populace. And it was certainly well within Counsel's right to urge that the evidence of men who were willing, on their own showing, to keep silence and let an innocent woman hang, could not be of very great consequence.

And then, another cogent plea which had been pressed before by Mr. Morton: why was not Mary Squires, Lucy's sick sister, called? Why was Lucy herself not called? Why was Mrs. Wells not called?

"They will say, she is a woman of bad character, and no credit can be given to her evidence: when they say that, they admit her a woman capable of committing the act complained of, or receiving persons who could do it."

Here again, the point at issue is evaded. Certainly, Mrs. Wells, as an infamous person, with the additional advantage of having had a husband who was hanged, was quite a likely woman to have stolen stays or to have connived at the stealing of stays. But that proposition would have held of some hundreds of Mrs. Harridans keeping house in London and its purlieus. The point to be ascertained was not: is Mrs. Wells infamous? but: was Elizabeth Canning robbed in Mrs. Wells's house?

The question of the hay in Elizabeth's supposed place of confinement: did she, or did she not mention hay before Mr. Adamson rode back to meet her on 1st February? We know Elizabeth uttered no word of hay when she laid her information before Alderman Chitty, speaking rather of lying on bare boards. Next—a good

point so far as it goes—the proved inability of the prosecution to show, even to suggest, where Elizabeth was from 1st January to 29th January 1753, if she were not at Susannah Wells's, as she herself declared. As Mr. Nares said: the case had been before the world for nearly eighteen months, it had been discussed everywhere, the rumours of it had penetrated everywhere, the prosecution had, presumably, used all their efforts to find out the hidden lurking-place of Elizabeth: with no result whatever. Logically, of course, the prosecution might say, as I think they did say: "it is not our business to declare where Elizabeth Canning was, but where she was not." This is just: but Mr. Nares was certainly well advised in putting this point very strongly to the jury.

Finally; as to the evidence that is to be called for the defence. Three people will say that they saw Elizabeth Canning on her way home from Enfield Wash to Aldermanbury. Then as to the first communication made by the girl on her return.

"How does she tell it? [her story]. More as if she was desirous of concealing, than of artfully publishing it. You find her at her first arrival so weak that she could not run into a long detail; and when she grew more able to relate it, it came out only by answers to questions asked from time to time; in which she answered no further than the question absolutely required, or obliged her."

This, urges Mr. Nares, is not the manner in which an impostor would tell her tale. If Elizabeth Canning had determined to tell a pack of lies of malice aforethought, she would have

related her story of it as quickly as possible, lest she should forget it. But here, again, we are in the region of general principles and probabilities which may or may not be applicable to this particular case. Counsel was on much firmer ground when he passes to his positive evidence. He will produce, he says, twenty-five or thirty witnesses —" many of whom are persons of figure and fortune "—who will swear that they saw the remarkable Mary Squires at Enfield Wash on the 16th or 17th of December. These witnesses, it appears, have their little circumstances and events and trifles by which the appearance of the gipsy is fixed in their memory: why should not the jury believe them rather than the men from the west? And then, I think, Mr. Nares adopts a rather mistaken line of argument: our witnesses, he says, all live in a certain limited area, ten miles from London: their characters are known and—he adds—unimpeachable. Whereas, it is impossible to know anything about the characters of the witnesses for the prosecution, " because one is picked up at one place, and another at another." The witnesses for Mary Squires were, in fact, strung out on the road from Abbotsbury to Salisbury: the witnesses against her were all inhabitants of Enfield Wash and its neighbourhood. There is force in this; but it might be argued on the other side that if you want to " get at " witnesses, the task is much simpler when they all live in one parish than when they are scattered on a hundred miles of highway.

The jury are urged to lay no stress on any

little discrepancies that may appear in Elizabeth Canning's various accounts of the room in which she said she was shut up. She was frightened out of her wits: is it to be expected that she should be minute and particular as to petty details? Well; I do not know. One might suppose that a person vilely imprisoned in a room for a month, and, as Mr. Nares said, in great terror and distress, would have every petty detail of that room annealed into her memory: but what do we know? Terror may produce a dazed torpor, a semi-anæsthesia in some constitutions. Still; I do not see how terror could turn a long room into a square one, or blot out half a load of hay, or make light dark.

Mr. Nares draws to the end of his speech. He says that White, the Lord Mayor's officer, "told you, because he was forced so to do, well knowing that Adamson would say so, that he perceived some lime, or lath and plaster, broke from the wall [under the window by which Elizabeth Canning said she had escaped], as if somebody had got out." This is not borne out by the evidence as reported in the State Trials. White said:

"There was no appearance of anybody being there for some time; neither did it appear to me as if anybody had been out of that window; I called Mr. Adamson to show him; he would have persuaded me there were some scratches on the wall with her foot, but I could not see any."

Finally: there is the fact—certainly, a highly suspicious fact—that the last figure of the date of the letter written from Basingstoke is missing: and the speeches for the defence are ended.

VII

THE first witness called for the defence was Edward Lyon, with whom Elizabeth Canning was servant, at the time of her disappearance. He said that on 1st January 1753, his wife gave Elizabeth liberty to go to see her uncle in Saltpetre Bank; he had known the girl for sixteen years before she was his servant, and believed her to be a very honest person.

"She not coming home that night, we inquired about, and sent to her mother several times, but heard nothing of her. . . . The first time I saw her afterwards was on the 31st day of the said month before Mr. Alderman Chitty; she was there in order to take up a person that she said had used her ill at Enfield Wash. I being a little thick of hearing, cannot give much account of what passed before the Alderman."

Mr. Lyon tells how he drove to Enfield Wash on 1st February, with Mr. Nash, Mr. Hague, and Mr. Aldridge. As they were on their way, in the coach:

"Mr. Wintlebury [a former master of Elizabeth's] came riding on horseback, and said they had taken a number of people in Mrs. Wells's house. When we came there, I saw about ten persons, one man and the rest women, sitting round the fire in what they call the parlour. After I had been there some time, Elizabeth

Canning came, and was brought in and set upon the dresser: I went to her and said, ' Bet, will you take anything to refresh you ? ' She said, ' No,' I said, ' Do not be daunted, for you have friends about you, and, on the other hand, be careful, and challenge nobody in this house without you are positive of them.' ' Sir,' said she, ' I will not.' ' Then,' said I, ' you shall see them.' Accordingly she was taken from the dresser, and led by two into the room. She saw Mrs. Wells first, and said, she had nothing to say to her; and upon seeing Mrs. Squires, she said, ' That is the woman that cut my stays off.' "

And as to the question of the attitude of the gipsy, at the moment of identification:

" Was she [the gipsy] sitting or standing ? "

" She was sitting first, but she got up out of her chair."

" When Elizabeth Canning fixed on her, was she sitting or standing ? "

" Squires was just got out [? of her chair] as she charged her, and came towards her."

" Attend to the question: was she sitting or standing up ? "

" The room was full of people: I cannot justly say whether it was the time she was getting out or got out: several people got nearer than I did."

" Have you any reason to think Elizabeth Canning saw her face, before she fixed upon her person ? "

" I believe she saw her face."

" Why do you think so ? "

" I think she would hardly charge her without the sight of her face; I have no other reason."

" When Mary Squires was charged with being the person, what was done ? "

" She came up to her, and said, ' I hope you will not swear my life away, for I never saw you. . . ."

" Did you hear Mary Squires say where she was at that time ? "

" I did not hear anything of that."

It will be remembered that a different account of this strange scene was given by some of the witnesses for the prosecution. They gave a picturesque description of the old gipsy woman, her head all muffled in clouts—a sort of mobled queen of gipsydom—crouching, bending almost double, over the fire, smoking her pipe. Elizabeth comes into the parlour, denouncing her at once, without hesitation, without a word from Mrs. Wells; and the gipsy seems to hear nothing, but still crouches over the hearth and puffs her pipe. It is the daughter, Lucy, who rouses her, and tells her of the charge that is made against her; it is then that she rises, and discloses that terrible face, and declares that she was over a hundred miles away on the day on which the robbery was charged against her. And it is to be noted that Mr. Lyon was not a very clear or resolved witness: he is cloudy as to the exact position of the gipsy when Elizabeth accused her; he confesses that he was not well placed in the crowd that filled the room for seeing exactly what happened: he believes that Canning must have seen the gipsy's face before

identifying her; but he believes this, honest man, simply because he cannot believe that any one would identify, as it were, in the dark. We need not take much notice of Mr. Lyon; he seems honest, but a muddler.

But he is interesting as to George Squires.

"When Canning came in, was she asked, whether she had anything to accuse George with?"

"She saw Lucy before she did him: she said, 'That young woman was in the room when my stays were cut off'; then she saw Virtue Hall, and said the same to her; but she did nothing to her."

—"Did nothing to her," is to be interpreted, I suppose, "took no notice of her."

"After that George Squires was brought forward to her: said she, 'That man looks very much like the man that robbed me in Moorfields, but I will not swear to him.' He had pulled his greatcoat off in the house, I think, before she came: he had it on before Justice Tashmaker; then she said she verily believed he was the man, and that was the coat he had on, which he put her gown under, when she was robbed in Moorfields; but she would not swear to him."

Now it will be remembered that Messrs. Hague, Nash and Aldridge gave the impression that there had been a kind of coolness on the way home from Enfield Wash between them and Mr. Lyon. Roughly, Mr. Lyon believed in Elizabeth's story; they did not; and Mr. Lyon was somewhat cross with them. Mr. Lyon does

not exactly contradict this: he rather minimizes it. Thus of Nash: " He seemed very well satisfied; I could see but very little otherwise: I cannot say but he did say something, but I cannot recollect what. I can recollect Mr. Hague said, he did not see any grate in the chimney, nor pictures in the front of it." Still: " after that we had a beefsteak at the ' Three Crowns ' at Newington, and were good friends." And, a matter which strongly confirms the view that Mary Squires was so strangely, grotesquely, uniquely hideous that Elizabeth Canning could not have failed to describe her in the strongest and most marked terms on her return, if Elizabeth had ever seen her:

" Mr. Nash," said Lyon, " was once at my house afterwards—I presume between the apprehension of the gipsy and her trial—and as he was going out of the door, he made use of a very odd expression: he said, ' Mr. Lyon, I hope God Almighty will destroy that model that he made that face by, and never make another by it ': a very odd expression, I remember it very well, meaning the gipsy."

Mr. Davy cross-examines Edward Lyon, and very effectively. Thus, of the identification scene in the parlour:

" Were you with her [Elizabeth Canning] in the parlour ? "

" I was just at, or hardly in the parlour door."

" How many people were there between you and Mary Squires ? "

" It is impossible I should tell; there might be five or six between me and the people in a

circle round the fire; the parlour was almost full of people."

" When they were all in the room, and Canning also there, and you at a distance, whether you could see Mary Squires sitting by the fire ? "

" No otherwise than this, in a cleft between the people's shoulders."

" Did you see her sitting ? "

" I did; this was all in a very little time before Canning charged her with robbing her."

" How far is the chimney from the door ? "

" It may be ten or eleven feet."

" Did you see her after Canning was in the room ? "

" I did. . . ."

" Was her face or back towards you ? "

" She was sideways, partly to me."

" Did you see her sitting on a chair, after Canning was in the room ? "

" No, I did not, till after she got up; but saw her sitting by the fire, between the people, just at Canning's coming into the room."

" How long was Canning in the room before she charged her ? "

" She charged her in a very little time."

" What did the gipsy do upon that ? "

" She took her hat off and opened the clout which was upon her head; her face was almost hid with them before."

" Could you see the side of her head when you was at the door ? "

" Not then, but before and after I did."

. . . " Have you any other reason for be-

lieving Canning saw the face of Mary Squires, than from your good opinion of her ? "

" No otherwise "—that is, " I have no other reason for my belief." . . .

" Did she [the gipsy] desire Canning to take notice of her face ? "

" I did not hear; I am thick of hearing at some times, and I was then; I am more in winter than at other times."

So that Mr. Lyon could not hear very well, and, by reason of the press of people, could not see very well; and so, clearly, is in no position to say what the gipsy said, or whether Elizabeth Canning identified her without seeing her face, or no. But on the whole; one gathers from his evidence that the old woman was muffled up; that very little could be seen of her face; and that Canning identified her directly she came into the room; without any pause, hesitation, or close and deliberate scrutiny. And if only Canning had said, between her return journey on 29th January and the visit to Enfield Wash on 1st February, if she had said that she had been robbed by a monster in semi-human form, if she had dwelt on the horrible scars of scrofula that disfigured that gargoyle countenance: then her Counsel might have urged that a moment's glance was sufficient for identification. But Canning had only said that she had been robbed by a woman.

In cross-examination as to the journey home in the coach, Lyon modified his evidence in chief. In this he had hinted at some doubting remarks from Nash and Hague; now:

" Did you hear or understand any doubt they had touching this affair ? "

" No, I did not."

" Was either of them dissatisfied at the account she had given, and at her behaviour when in the house ? "

" No, none at all; we were as agreeable as we were when we went down."

And then again, still cross-examined by Mr. Davy, he qualifies in the other direction:

" Have you had any dispute or falling out with Mr. Hague, Mr. Aldridge or Mr. Nash, no account of this affair ? "

" No, not on any account. Some few words, that I related, were concerning the grate and pictures over the chimney; Mr. Hague was saying there would be some marks where they had hung."

No falling out on any account; but a few minutes later, Mr. Lyon says that though he and Mr. Nash and Mr. Aldridge had been intimate friends, he had " no conversation with them now." And it appeared that Mr. Lyon disapproved strongly of Mr. Nash's conduct as to the trial of the gipsy:

" My reason [for the discontinuance of his friendship with Mr. Nash] is this: that he did not appear: that he should seem to have something to say, and not say it. I thought it was an odd thing not to appear, and then to appear afterwards."

Mr. Lyon had been one of the active members of the Brotherhood of the friends of Elizabeth Canning. He had been prominent with others

in offering a reward for the apprehension of the two men who were supposed to have set on Elizabeth at Moorfields. Therefore, it might be presumed that Lyon had taken particular pains to satisfy himself of the truth of the Canning story; that he had it at first hand; that as Elizabeth's master he would be likely to have very special opportunities for hearing the girl's tale from her own lips. But, as it appeared, he knew nothing at first hand, that he had, practically, not examined the girl at all, that he had taken no pains to sift her story in any way. Artful Mr. Davy had drawn out all this, without giving any indication of his object.

"Have you ever talked with her, since her return home, of anything that passed during the time of her absence?"

"I can say nothing in particular."

"If you had any conversation with her about it, it must be particular."

"I know nothing but, 'How do you do, Betty?' But as to relating how she was used, or anything like it, I cannot tell anything in particular."

"Then what do you remember upon the whole?"

"I have often seen her and talked with her since, but cannot remember any particular part, or words, that have been related."

"Whether you expressed to her any surprise concerning the account she gave to you of her ill-usage?"

"She has never given me an account in a particular manner; it was always to other persons."

" Had you any talk with her, since her return relating to a cunning man ? "—The " cunning man " will have his turn later on.

" No, none at all, nor don't know she has heard it, one thing, I think, I recollect: at Mr. Marshall's house I was with her, and asked her thus: ' Bet, if you know anything of this affair, that you believe you are mistaken in, or such like, I desire you will let me know it; don't deceive us upon any account.' ' Sir,' said she, ' I have said nothing but what is really true.' "

And so it was mere hearsay that impelled Mr. Lyon to put himself forward in the cause of Elizabeth Canning.

And now the letter, the very strange letter, written by Gawen Nash to Edward Lyon. It was dated 10th February 1753, and runs as follows:

> Mr. Lyon,
>
> I am informed by Mr. Aldridge, who has been at Enfield, that if a person be appointed there to receive contribution, some money would be raised in that place for the unhappy, poor girl. I wish you success, and am yours,
>
> Gawen Nash.

And yet this Gawen Nash had sworn that he had always been convinced that Elizabeth Canning's evidence was false, from the date of his visit to Enfield Wash, on 1st February 1753. And ten days later, he was doing his best " for the unhappy, poor girl." Mr. Gawen Nash is, clearly, a discredited witness. He was, probably, a shuffler and a coward. Very likely, he was

convinced on 1st February that Elizabeth Canning's story was a lie. Very likely, he hinted to Mr. Lyon on the way back to London his doubts of that story. But by 10th February all London, all England were thrilling with the story of Elizabeth Canning. The sea of mania and delusion was swelling to its wild height: it was rank heresy to doubt a word in the girl's story—and Mr. Gawen Nash was anxious to put himself on the right side. Perhaps he remembered those incautious and unbelieving words he had let fall in the coach from Enfield Wash; perhaps he feared lest he should be dismissed from the service of the Goldsmiths' Company. The reason for his keeping out of the witness-box at the trial of Mary Squires is clear enough at any rate.

Now comes the story of Canning's return, as told by her witnesses. It is one of the most notable parts of the trial; it contains, as it were, the first draught of her story, the tune which was elaborated with so many variations. And it introduces us in full to the very singular and interesting personality of Mr. Scarrat, the man who had only to hear about the Hertford road to be quite sure that Elizabeth had been held at Mother Wells's.

The first witness was Thomas Colley, uncle to Elizabeth Canning, glass-blower, living at Saltpetre Bank, East Smithfield. He gave evidence that on 1st January 1753, Elizabeth Canning came to his house at twelve o'clock, noon, and stayed there till about nine in the evening. After supper, he said, he and his wife went along

with Elizabeth homewards, to the end of Houndsditch, and then turned back to Saltpetre Bank. Mr. Colley said he had every reason to believe what his niece told him: that she was going back to her master's; and being asked abruptly whether he had any reason to suppose she was breeding, replied, "No, I had not." Cross-examined by Mr. Willes, Colley said he had never seen Elizabeth in better health.

"What had you to dinner?"

"Some of a cold shoulder of mutton and potatoes, which was dressed the Sunday before."

"Did she eat a hearty dinner?"

"She eat as hearty as she could; she seemed to eat as hearty as I did."

"This being New Year's Day, what did you give her to drink?"

"She drank some ten-shilling beer which I had in the house. . . . ."

Thomas Colley said that he went to his work in the afternoon; and it was elicited from him that his wife drank tea of afternoons, and that she usually preferred toast and butter with it. At seven, Mr. Colley returned from work.

"What had you for supper?"

"We had some of a sirloin of beef roasted."

"Did your niece eat of that?"

"She eat a small quantity of that, but could not eat much."

"What did she drink after that?"

"She drank a small quantity of ten-shilling beer."

And all these questions were asked, in the frank phrase of Mr. Morton, counsel for Eliza-

beth, with the object of " forcing a stool "; it being part of the girl's tale that during the whole month of her imprisonment, she had not once enjoyed that salutary relaxation.

And the manner, in which the news of his niece's disappearance came to Mr. Colley:

" When did you hear she was missing ? "

" I heard that the same evening; her mother's apprentice came to my house that same night, and called and awaked me and my wife out of our sleep, as nigh as I can guess, between eleven and twelve o'clock." . . .

" What did the apprentice say ? "

" He said: the girl's master had been at his mistress's house, and wanted to know where she was, and upon that he came to know."

Mrs. Colley collaborated her husband in all particulars, adding the important fact that there was toast and butter for tea, but Elizabeth eat but a very little. Once or twice in the course of the afternoon Mrs. Colley and her niece had gone into the glass-house to watch Mr. Colley at work, and when the sirloin was ready Mrs. Colley sent her niece to fetch her uncle home from the " Black Boy," seven or eight doors off. And so on, to the parting in Houndsditch on the way home; and then Mr. Recorder asks:

" When did you see her first again ? "

" On King Charles's Martyrdom, and never till then."

" Did she complain she had been confined ? "

" She did, and was in bed, and very ill; and there was a gentlewoman talking to her, named Polly Lyon; we did not care to ask her many

questions, she being very ill and in a low condition; she could hardly speak, she was so very faint."

" Can you tell what it was occasioned by ? "

" By being used very ill, and half-starved."

Then Elizabeth Canning, the elder, the girl's mother, was sworn.

" Did you know of her going to her uncle's, Mr. Colley's ? "

" I did; she called at my house (it was on a Monday, New Year's Day) and told me she was going to her uncle."

" Was there, or was there not, any account brought to your house that night, that she was not come back ? "

" Mr. Lyon, her master, came to my house just after nine o'clock, and said, he wondered she stayed so long: I was frightened out of my wits; I sent my three children into the fields to see after her, and I sent my apprentice to Mr. Colley's, her uncle; they said, they had parted with her after nine o'clock at Houndsditch. I sent again in the morning, and I went myself before it was light. Mrs. Colley was abed then: I said, ' Let me in; let me in '; Mrs. Colley got up, and said, ' O lack, has she not come in yet ? ' I said, ' No.' She said she left her there. Her husband was called from the glass-house, and I was ready to run distracted."

" From that time to the 30th or 31st of January, did you hear anything of your daughter or know where she was ? "

" She came home the day before King Charles's Martyrdom, at a quarter after ten

o'clock. I had advertised her in the papers the first time on my own head; and then afterwards one, Mrs. Maynard, a turner's wife, came to me, and said, 'Have you advertised her any more?' I said, I did not think to do it; indeed, it was out of my power, it was very hard with me."

"Did you hear anything in consequence of this advertisement?"

"One gave me a shilling, and another gave me a shilling; so I advertised her two or three times, and had no account of her."

"Upon your oath did you know anything of her during the time she was gone?"

"No, I did not."

"On this night what time did your daughter come home?"

"A quarter after ten."

"Where was you when she came home?"

"I was partly getting into bed, and my apprentice was going to fasten the door. He called, and said, 'Here is somebody at the door.' I said, 'Who is it?' He said, 'Betty.' I said, 'What Betty?' He said, 'Our Betty.' My little girl ran screaming up to the chimney: I said, 'Feel her, feel her': I thought she was an apparition. She came in this posture (describing it, which was almost double, and walking sideways, holding her hands before her). When she came up so, I took her to be an apparition."

"What was her dress?"

"She had a loose bedgown, and a rag about her head, and her ear was bloody, and the rag was bloody."

" Did you, before she brought that bedgown home, ever see it before ? "

" No, never in my life. I never wore such a thing, so poor as it is with me."

" Did any of your neighbours come in, after your daughter came home ? "

" After my daughter came home, the first that came in was Mrs. Woodward; my apprentice James ran and fetched her, and Polly Lyon next door to me; and the third person was Mrs. Myers; then Mr. Roberts's maid, and Mr. Wintlebury."

" Now, when these people were come in, was your daughter interrogated by them where she had been ? "

" They asked her where she had been. Her master (her former master) Wintlebury took her by the hand, and said, ' Where have you been ? ' She said, ' Sir, I don't know, but only by seeing my mistress's coach, the Hertfordshire coach ': she was not able to say the place where she had been at."

" Was she able to give an account of the persons ? "

" No; she said there was an old woman, and two young ones, and she should know them again if she saw them, she thought."

" Did she give an account to you what sort of an old woman it was ? "

" No, she did not."

This is notable. We have heard what a very extraordinary sort of old woman Mary Squires was: yet Elizabeth has not a word to say about those grotesque and dreadful features.

Mrs. Canning went on to say that everybody in the room asked her daughter questions as to what she had done and suffered while she had been away.

" She was confined where there was hay in the room; she said she lived upon bread and water; that from the Friday to the Monday she had none to subsist on."

Note here that afterwards Elizabeth forgot all about the hay. When she swore her information before the Alderman: then she said she had lain on the bare boards.

Mrs. Canning continues. There were in the room on the night of her daughter's return, Mr. Wintlebury, Mr. Scarrat, Mrs. Woodward, and Polly Lyon. Elizabeth was in such a low state that when Polly Lyon brought some wine and Mrs. Woodward mulled it, she could not swallow any. The apothecary was summoned the next day, and he ordered " glysters," which we call enemas; and three of these were found to be necessary.

" How came there to be a suspicion," asked Counsel, " that it was at Mother Wells's she was confined ? "

" She nominated the name of Mother Wills or Wells that night, she did not know which; that she heard them call it very plain."

" Had anybody that was there given her the least hint of Wills or Wells, or any name like it ? "

" No soul ever spoke to her till her own mouth mentioned it."

" How was it first known or believed, that

this Mother Wills or Wells lived at Enfield Wash ? "

" I don't know, sir; because she had described it to be upon the Hertfordshire road: upon this there was application made to Mr. Alderman Chitty."

There are very curious things in this evidence of Mrs. Canning's. Turn back to the evidence of Alderman Chitty. There was the question:

" Do you recollect whether, in the time she was in confinement, she heard anything by which she could discover the names of any of the people ? "

" The name of Wells was not mentioned at all by her."

But to go on with Mrs. Canning's examination in chief.

" Who fixed it down to be the house of Mother Wells at Enfield Wash ? "

" I don't know; there were a great many people, and I was so concerned I did not hear all their talk."

" Was there any proposal to go down to Enfield Wash ? "

" There was; we went down on the Thursday after she came home; she came home on a Monday night; there was Mrs. Myers, Mrs. Garrat, my girl and me, and a young child in my arms; we went in a chaise."

" Do you recollect anybody that met you on the road before you got down ? "

" Yes, Mr. Adamson."

" Did he give you or your daughter any, or what description of the house of Mother Wells?"

"Upon my oath he did not."

"Did he ask Betty any questions?"

"His horse would not stand still: he said, 'Drive, coachman, I wonder you stay so long.' The coachman said the road was so bad, and such a load he had, he could not go faster. He asked her what sort of a place she was in, and if she could remember it? and she said she could." . . .

"Recollect, when you came back, did Mr. Adamson bid her tell what was in the room, if she could?"

"I don't remember he did."

Mr. Davy cross-examined Mrs. Canning. First as to the advertisements for Elizabeth Canning during the time of her disappearance: who wrote them, who sent them to the printer: nothing very significant either in questions or answers, so far as I can see. Then a false scent. A gentlewoman in an oil shop, "the sign of the 'Two Jars,' through Bishopsgate, towards Cornhill," told Mrs. Canning that she had heard "a young voice, scream out in a coach; but whether it was a man's or woman's voice she could not tell." Neither date nor time is stated; but, presumably, this was on the night of 1st January; and this screaming was one of the items in the second advertisement. A false scent, I say, for anything that came of it in the course of the trial; but it strikes me as likely enough that Elizabeth Canning was in that coach, and likely enough that she screamed.

Then a good deal about the exact sum of money that Elizabeth Canning had on her,

when she left her mother on the morning of 1st January. It seemed that the original plan had been that Elizabeth was to return to her mother in the afternoon, and the two were to have gone out together on a shopping expedition. But the hospitable Colleys, having given their niece cold mutton for dinner, insisted on her staying for roast sirloin at supper; again, nothing very vital in all this. Then, further instances of Mrs. Canning's endeavours to find her lost daughter, including that visit to " the cunning man," of which we have had a hint already.

" Did you go to the Wood Street Compter ? "

" The people told me, if there were any quarrels, they would take all away, good and bad together, was the reason I went there."

" Did you go to a conjuror ? "

" I did. They call him the astrologer."

" Where does he live ? "

" He lives in the Old Bailey."

" What is his name ? "

" I don't know his name; he had a black wig over his face."

" When did you go to him ? "

" I don't know when I went."

" How long after your daughter was missing ? "

" I don't know. It was before she returned."

" What was done there ? "

" I told him I had lost my child; and after he had got my money, he bid me go home and advertise her; he said: ' Make yourself easy, she'll come home again.' "

" Did he tell you when she would return ? "

" No, he did not. He only asked me two or three questions, and wrote, scribble, scribble, scribble along."

" Did he tell you she was in the hands of an old woman ? "

" No, he did not."

" Recollect yourself."

" I don't know whether he did or no; he might, for what I know."

" Or what misfortune had happened to her ? "

" No."

" Whether he did not tell you she was in the hands of an old black woman ? "

" The word ' black ' I don't remember. I know he frightened me. When he shut the door, and lighted the candles up, he looked so frightful, I was glad to get out of the door again."

It is clear that Counsel attached a good deal of importance to this visit to the cunning man. So, it would seem, did Mrs. Canning. She shuffles over the point as to whether the seer mentioned an old woman, in connection with her daughter. She denies it flatly at first. Then, she says that perhaps the astrologer did mention an old woman. Then she doesn't recollect that he called the old woman " black," thereby admitting by implication that the old woman was mentioned by the wise man.

The cross-examination continues: what was the wise man's first question ? What was his second question ? did he ask what state of health Elizabeth was in ? did he say anything about Bishopsgate ? did you tell him of a dream

you had ? had you a dream or a vision about it ? or an apparition ? To which last question came the odd answer:

" No; but I had wandering thoughts. . . . I never had rest, night or day, for my thoughts were wandering."

" How came you to imagine she was confined by an old woman ? "

" It never came into my thoughts that she was; I more thought she was murdered in Houndsditch, and thrown into some ditch there."

" At this time upon your oath, had you ever heard of the name of Mother Wells, when you went to this cunning man ? "

" I never heard of that name till she came home."

" Did you mention the name of Mother Wells to him ? "

" No, I did not. He said, an old woman, I believe."

On the whole; one gets the impression that Mr. Davy is trying to get something important out of Mrs. Canning, and is not succeeding very well. As far as I can make out, Mr. Davy believed that the visit to the cunning man was part of an elaborate plot; that Mrs. Canning knew quite well where her daughter was; that there was a design to ruin and destroy Mrs. Wells, and that Mrs. Canning knew all about that too. And, from what follows, it is clear that Mr. Davy believed that the return of Elizabeth was carefully arranged and timed; that she came upon her cue, as the actors say.

"Do you remember your saying that you had prayed to God, and had an answer to your prayers, so as to assure you that your daughter would return?"

"I never had no answer. I prayed by myself, and gave up bills in the church, both at Aldermanbury and Cripplegate, and at the meetings, and at Mr. Wesley's. I did not leave a meeting or a place where I could put up a bill in."

Note the distinction between the "Meeting" and "Mr. Wesley's." One was the house of the old Dissenters: Presbyterians, Independents, Baptists; the other of the new, who were to become the Wesleyan Methodists of to-day.

Mr. Davy goes on trying to make his point: that the return of Elizabeth was a stage effect, carefully led up to.

"Did you not, about a quarter of an hour before your daughter returned, mention to the apprentice, you had prayed for your daughter's return, and that she would return presently?"

"I said to James, 'the last thing you do, pray for her'; he said he never went to prayer but what he did. This was just before she came in. I bid him every night pray for her, and I repeated it."

"Did you mention, that you believed your daughter would be at home that night?"

"No, I did not."

. . . "How soon after your daughter's coming in was it, that the apprentice was sent for these people?"

"He helped her into a chair, and went out directly; and immediately came in Mrs. Wood-

ward, Mrs. Myers, and Polly Lyon; and in two minutes the house was full."

"What things of the room at Wells's did your daughter mention that night?"

"She mentioned the chimney and the grate in the room, and said, she took the gown out of the grate." . . .

"Did she say, she lay upon hay?"

"She said, she did now and then, or always, I don't know which." . . .

"Had your daughter had a stool, did she say?"

"It is a constant method with her to go a fortnight without a stool. I have another little girl at home now, that commonly goes sometimes ten and sometimes eleven days without a stool."

. . . "When your daughter came home and told you this story, did you think it was a very strange one, or did you believe all she said?"

"No, I did not think it strange at all. I have known her, at home, to live upon half a roll a day, when things have gone hard with me."

. . . "How did she look when she came home?"

"Her face was swelled, bloated, and black, and sodden, as if it had lain in water, and her arms were black. She swallowed nothing hardly."

Questions suggesting that Canning had been suffering from syphilis: negatived by the mother. And, then, the mysterious, zealous Mr. Scarrat.

"Do you know Mr. Scarrat?"

"I have known him within this twelvemonth" —that is since the trial of Mary Squires.

" Did Scarrat come the first night she came home ? "

" He did."

" How lately, before your daughter returned, had you seen him ? "

" I never had any acquaintance with him before that. I don't know but I might see him go by a good many times; but I never spoke to him in my life before; but I hear since, he is a neighbour."

" Did he tell you he had formerly been at Mother Wells's ? "

" No, never."

" Did you never hear him say he had jumped out of the window himself ? "

" No, I never did."

. . . " Was anything mentioned of Enfield Wash the night of your daughter's return ? "

" I don't know when it was first mentioned. I believe it was when they all came together the next morning."

Mrs. Canning is questioned whether her daughter can write: she replies that she can a little, that it is " a sad hand," that she can hardly write at all, that she can just write her name, that she was a quarter of a year at a writing school. Then:

" Look at this paper (it was a notice of trial signed by Elizabeth Canning). Is this name her handwriting ? "

" I believe it is her scribbling like."

" Do you think, when your daughter could write, she would only make her mark ? "

" I do not know for that."

Whereupon, Mr. Davy, addressing the Court, points out that Elizabeth Canning's name is very well written in the paper he has just exhibited; and yet Elizabeth signed the information laid before Justice Fielding by her mark.

Questions as to the manner in which the girl was dressed on her return. Mrs. Canning swears that her head was covered with two ragged clouts, a half-handkerchief and a handkerchief: produces both.

" Whether did you not swear upon the trial of Mary Squires that your daughter had a cap on when she came home ? "

" No, not to my knowledge; she had no cap on to my knowledge."

Thereupon, Mr. Gurney, the shorthand writer is put into the box. He is quite sure that at the first trial Mrs. Canning said that her daughter came back with nothing but a ragged bedgown and a cap on.

Some discussion follows as to the exact terminology of the various advertisements inserted in the papers on the disappearance of Elizabeth. The description of the missing girl is curious.

" Elizabeth Canning went away from her friends between nine and ten on Monday night, betwixt Houndsditch and Bishopsgate, fresh-colour'd, pitted with the smallpox, high forehead, light eyebrows, about five foot high, well-set, had on a purple masquerade-stuff gown, black stuff petticoat, a white chip hat bound round with green, white apron and handkerchief, blue stockings, and leather shoes."

The next witness was James Lord, who said he had been apprenticed to Mrs. Canning for six or seven years. He described how Betty was missing "upon New Year's Day was twelvemonth." Mr. Lyon, Betty's master, as he said, had called on Mrs. Canning twice that night: towards nine and then towards ten. After the last visit, Lord was sent to the Colleys at Saltpetre Bank, and the Colleys were in bed, and Mrs. Colley told how she and her husband had parted from Elizabeth; and then, Lord said, how the inquiry for Elizabeth went on almost all through the night, and how he went round himself, from neighbour to neighbour.

"When was the next time you saw her?"

"On the 29th of January, the night before King Charles's Martyrdom, about a quarter after ten o'clock, I was just going to make fast the door, going to bed; somebody lifted up the latch; it goes with a bit of string; mistress was down upon her knees, a-praying to see her apparition, before she came in."

"Did you see her down upon her knees before Elizabeth Canning came in?"

"She was down on her knees sometime before ever she lifted up the latch."

But Counsel elicits the fact that Lord had seen Mrs. Canning on her knees several times between the disappearance of Elizabeth and her return. Lord continues his story:

"I had the candle in my hand, and was going to make fast the door, and she came in: mistress was praying: mistress asked who was there? I then looked her (Elizabeth) up in the

face, and thought it was somebody else come to inquire tidings after her: I did not know her at first: after I had looked her in the face again, she frightened me, because she looked in such a deplorable condition. I said to mistress, it was Betty: she said, 'What Betty?' I said, 'Our Betty': upon that mistress fell in a fit directly, and continued so some minutes, I cannot say how long."

"Upon your oath, do you think it was a real fit, or a sham fit?"

"I never saw her in a fit before; it was far from a sham fit. When Elizabeth Canning came in, she was e'en almost spent: I took her by the arms, and set her down in a chair; she was e'en almost dead, as black as the chimney-stock, black and blue: she was dressed up with an old bit of a handkerchief round her head and an old dirty, ragged bedgown, what they properly call a jacket."

"Did you see what was upon her head?"

"She had no cap, nor hat, nor stays on; her ear was cut and all bloody."

"Did it bleed as if it had been fresh cut?"

"It was bleeding."

"Was there any blood upon the handkerchief?"

"There was some blood on the handkerchief that was about her head: she had an old handkerchief in her hand, and a bit of one upon her head."

. . . "What condition did she seem to be in with regard to her health?"

"She seemed to be almost spent, just gone;

and if it had been much further, I believe she must have dropt down."

Lord goes on to say how, as soon as Mrs. Canning recovered from her fit (or faint, as we should put it) he was sent out to fetch Mrs. Woodward, Polly Lyon, and Mrs. Myers:

" They came; she began to say where she had been confined; the woman was either named Wills or Wells, at Enfield Wash."

" Was this that night ? "

" It was the same night. So many people came in, I was obliged to keep the door, to keep them out."

" Who asked her where she had been ? "

" My mistress; and she said, she had been at Enfield Wash, and heard the name of Wills or Wells, she did not know which; for she heard them go backwards and forwards in the house, and heard them call her by her name."

And yet: when Elizabeth was laying her first information, that made before Alderman Chitty, she said, in answer to the Alderman's question, that she knew no name. And so, I think it highly probable that James Lord, Mrs. Canning's apprentice, was a liar; and that his evidence may be neglected.

And here it may be as well to comment on another point, which does not appear to have attracted the attention of Counsel for the defence. We have seen that Mrs. Wells kept a disorderly house, a house of the most infamous character, as Mr. Davy freely admitted, otherwise, a peculiarly low and squalid brothel. That was clear from the testimony of all sides. The

place was notorious, and its fame extended even to the back parts of the city. Here, no doubt, dissolute tradesmen of the smaller sort, idle apprentices, Simon Tappertits, gay dogs from the Minories, and bloods of Aldgate very much down at heel, took their pleasure; either bringing their wenches there, or finding them to their hand.

Very well; then what does Fortune Natus mean by saying that he never saw "any harm in the house," that it was "a very sober, honest house," that he never saw "any ill tricks, or irregularity" all the time he was there? Yet, he admits that Mrs. Wells's establishment had a very bad name; and one must inquire whether a decent labouring man would take his wife to live in an acknowledged brothel, whether it is not probable that his wife, Judith Natus, was on the regular staff of the establishment; and finally whether much importance ought to be attached to the evidence of Fortune or of Judith. Of course, this point may be pressed farther. It may be asked whether Mary Squires would have stayed in a bawdy house with her two daughters; if she or they had been decent people; it may be asked also if Mother Wells would not have declined to take decent people as lodgers; her business being quite remote from decency. To put it bluntly: if the Natus couple and the gipsy party were of the decent kind, they must have been occupying, at a miserable rental, rooms for which Simon Tappertit and his friends would have paid handsomely—by comparison. A gin-palace does not cater for teetotallers.

I think this point deserves consideration. It seems to me, as I have hinted, that the case of the male and female Natus is dubious; though, for all that, their story may be in the main a true one, true, I mean, as relating to their occupancy of the loft for so many weeks; true in their denial of having seen Elizabeth Canning till the raid of 1st February. And as to the gipsies; I do not suppose that they were at all nice people; any of them. By the nature of the case, it was impossible for gipsies to be " nice "—using the word in its sense of particular—and it may be said that they did not care where they slept so long as there was a roof over their heads. But I believe, on the other hand, that the gipsy women have as a general rule borne a good character for sexual morality—and the fame of Susannah Wells was more than unsavoury. Yet, let it be remembered, when all is said, that none of these considerations goes to show that Mary Squires was within a hundred miles of Enfield Wash on the morning of 2nd January 1753. The evidence appears conclusive, if anything can be conclusive, that at that date she was at Abbotsbury, in Dorsetshire.

And another point: Mother Wells's place was a bawdy house; frequented by profligates of low order, not by Beauclerks or Chesterfields. This must have been a noisy house, a house of shouts and songs and tumults and drunken clamours at all hours of the night. One would have hailed another continually, and in no modulated tones. The common-room of the establishment was doubtless the kitchen. The loft where

Elizabeth said she was shut up was just over the kitchen. There was a hole, stuffed up with hay, in the floor of her room. She must have heard every word above a whisper uttered in that kitchen. A presentation of the vile character of the place would have given glory to the halo of her chastity. How is it, then, that the only word that she heard during her month's stay in the loft was, by her account, Wills or Wells ? She would have heard more than this if she had been occupying a cell in a nunnery.

VIII

THE unsatisfactory Lord was duly cross-examined. Counsel tried to make him admit that, on the night of Elizabeth's return, Mrs. Canning was "working up the situation," as the actors say, throwing out hints that her daughter might be expected at any moment. Lord entirely refused to accept any of Mr. Gascoyne's suggestions: "She did not expect her coming home that night, or that week, no more than any other."

And then we come again to that troublesome question of the "cunning man." Evidently the case for the prosecution was that this wizard of the Old Bailey, cunning or not, was of the highest consequence. They regarded him as one of the actors in the plot; I am not quite clear on what grounds. But if the prosecution were eager to probe the affair of the cunning man to the quick; the defence were equally anxious to keep him in the background, to shuffle concerning him, to admit as little knowledge of him as possible. Mrs. Canning had to be harried terribly, before she would admit that the conjuror had mentioned an old woman in connection with Elizabeth; and her apprentice was equally difficult on this point.

"Do you know anything of your mistress's going to a cunning man?"

"I know nothing at all about it: she did not acquaint me with it."

"What, not of going to a conjuror?"

"No; she does not acquaint me with all her affairs."

"Did you never hear her mention she had gone, or would go, to a cunning man?"

"No."

"Did you never hear your mistress relate a dream or vision she had had?"

"No, not to my knowledge."

"Are you sure?"

"I might, or might not hear it; I cannot tell; the care of my mistress's business lies upon me, and I have other things to mind."

"Give me a direct answer, whether you ever heard any such transaction concerning your mistress's going to a conjuror, or having been there?"

"There was some talk of a cunning man; but I did not know whether she had been with one."

"What was said of the cunning man?"

"I do not know; I remember there was mention made of a cunning man that lived at the Old Bailey."

"What cunning man was that that lived in the Old Bailey?"

"He used to tell fortunes."

"How came this cunning man to be mentioned?"

"I believe mistress or somebody did go to him; but I do not know who."

"For what did they go?"

"To hear somewhat of her daughter."

"Did you hear this before or after she had been there?"

" I believe it was after."

" Whom did you hear speak of it ? "

" To the best of my remembrance, it was my mistress herself."

And so, Mr. Gascoyne has firmly established one fact of importance, namely that James Lord, apprentice, was a liar and perjurer. He denies three times, firmly and precisely, that Mrs. Canning ever told him anything about a cunning man, or of her visit to such a person; within a few minutes he admits that Mrs. Canning had told him about a cunning man. He shuffles: it was " mistress or somebody " that went to see the conjuror, he does not know who. But to the fourth question after this, he replies:

" I did not hear a word what he said to her: I heard no more than that she had been there " —and so confesses that he has lied again.

He describes the aspect of Betty on the night of her return.

" She was black and blue on her face and arms, like the stack of a chimney," she looked as if she had been beaten, " her face and hands would compare for blackness, to a hat almost."

. . . " Did the black and blue seem to be bruises ? "

" The colour of her flesh was next akin to the colour of beating."

. . . " When she came home what had she on as to clothes ? "

" She had a piece of an old handkerchief about her head, and a black petticoat, I believe an upper one; I think it was the same she went

away with. She had nothing over her but that jacket."

. . . "Did the petticoat look clean or dirty?"

"It looked as if it had been draggled in country dirt, with dirt and mud."

"How do you know the difference between country dirt and London dirt?"

"Because London dirt is black, and the other lighter."

"Did you see the ear was fresh bleeding?"

"It was."

This is remarkable. This ear, according to Canning's story, had been torn as she escaped by the window at Mrs. Wells's. She had been six hours on the road; just the time, by the way, that she had taken when she was dragged unconscious between the two sturdy villains. The wound, one gathers, was by no means a severe one—there are no great vessels in the ear. The blood would surely have dried in that six hours' walk, in cold weather? It may be suggested that Elizabeth had not so long a walk as she averred. And another interesting point, as to the bedgown, or jacket.

"Look at this bedgown."

"This is the bedgown she came home in, the day before King Charles's Martyrdom."

"Did you ever see it before you saw it upon her, the night she came home, on the 29th of January?"

"No; I never did."

"Is it your mistress's?"

"No, I am positive it is not."

This bedgown, it may be remembered, was claimed by Elizabeth Canning, at the end of her examination before the Lord Mayor. The Lord Mayor wished to keep it, in order that it might be identified; Elizabeth said it belonged to her mother. Yet she had said previously that she had found it in the grate of the loft at Mother Wells's. The circumstance is small in itself; but it shows quite conclusively that Elizabeth was a liar, and a deliberate liar. There can be no question of mistaking, or of forgetting here. It is quite clear that when she left her mother on the morning of 1st January 1753, she was not wearing the bedgown aforesaid. It is equally clear, on the evidence of her mother and on the evidence of the apprentice, Lord, that she was wearing it when she came back. She said she took it from the loft at Enfield Wash: it is manifest that she took it from somewhere. It is quite impossible, then, that she could have thought for a moment that it was the property of her mother. Why, then, did she lie to the Lord Mayor? Because, it would seem, she was afraid that the bedgown might be identified, and that the true story of her month's disappearance would be revealed. But if this were so; then Elizabeth's retirement must have been a voluntary one. For if she had been held against her will; then her gaolers would certainly not have come forward and identified the bedgown, saying: "This is our bedgown; it is we who robbed and imprisoned Elizabeth Canning." There is, of course, the bare possibility that Elizabeth's motive may have been mere cove-

tousness. The Canning's were very poor and thought in halfpence; even an old dud like the bedgown may have seemed to them worth a lie. But the lie was a very dangerous lie, and, besides, when the girl was examined before the Lord Mayor, the friends of Elizabeth were all-powerful, and had been making collections for their chaste heroine; the days of halfpence were over.

The next witness was Robert Scarrat; one of the principal mystery men of the story, believed, indeed, by the prosecution to be one of the arch-contrivers of the whole plot, possibly the very abductor of Elizabeth Canning. Mr. Scarrat was a journeyman hartshorn-scraper, a craft that I have never heard of in these days. He boarded and lodged at the house of Mr. Carlton, a potter, in Aldermanbury Postern, next door but one to Mrs. Canning's house. But he said that he had never spoken to the older Canning or the younger Canning, and this point Mrs. Canning confirmed. It turned out, as she said, that they were neighbours, but she knew nothing of Mr. Scarrat before the night of Elizabeth's return.

Well, the apothecary's maid ran into Mr. Carlton's house on that famous night and announced the return of Elizabeth. Mr. Scarrat, curious and interested, went next door but one, to Mrs. Canning's.

" I was there some time before she spoke a word. Mr. Wintlebury came in after me: he said, ' Bet, how do you do ? ' She said, ' Oh, sir, you don't know how I have suffered.' He asked her where she had been. She said she had

been on the Hertfordshire road. He asked her how she came to know that. She said she saw the coachman, that used to drive her mistress into Hertfordshire, go by. She was asked how far she might have been in the country. She said it might be about nine or ten miles. . . . I asked her if she knew the name of the person, and said, I'll lay a guinea to a farthing, she has been at Mother Wells's, for that is as noted a house as any is; she said her name is Mother Wills or Wells."

"Was that answer after you had said you would lay a guinea to a farthing she had been at Mother Wells's house?"

"It was."

Now this is the first mention of Susannah Wells in the case. It is clear that Scarrat suggested the name; it is clear that Elizabeth accepted the suggestion. And it appears that the prosecution held that Scarrat had an old grudge against Wells, and that he took this opportunity to pay it off. That may have been so. But on the other hand, it is possible that Scarrat was one of those infernal busybodies who will do anything for notoriety, who are resolved to be "on in the scene," at whatever cost to others. I remember ten or twelve years ago a poor man was tried at the Old Bailey on the charge of murdering his own little boy. A woman came forward and swore she had seen the father and son together on the day of the murder. Now she lied; that was soon evident; she collapsed utterly under the cross-examination of Counsel for the defence. But so far as I remember, there was no

evidence that she had any grudge against the father; to the best of my belief she did not even know him. But she would be on in the scene; even at the possible cost of hanging an innocent man. I heard the woman give her evidence, witnessed her collapse; she was evidently a gabbling idiot and nothing more. I had not the pleasure of being at the Old Bailey when Mr. Scarrat gave his evidence; it is hard to know whether he was a conspirator or merely a meddlesome and impertinent fool. So let him continue:

" I asked her about the house: she said she had been confined in a longish, darkish room, and saw the coachman through the crack of the windows, and that there were some boards nailed over it. . . . I asked her if she took notice if any of these fields [near Mrs. Wells's] were ploughed up. She said, she believed there was. I asked her, when she was in them fields, on which hand was the road. She said on the right hand coming to London. I asked her when she came out of these fields whether she observed coming over a little brook. She said she did. I asked her if she thought it was a tan-house; she said she believed it was.* I said it was Mr. Neal's, a tanner, at Enfield Wash."

" Did you know the road ? "

" I did very well; and that there was such a house, and what sort of a character it bore, that it was a very bad house. She said she met a man, and asked her road to London. She said she had

* It may be thought that a sentence has been omitted here; but such is not the case.

been robbed, and described the person that cut her stays off to be a tall, black, swarthy woman."

"Who asked that question?"

"It was asked but I can't tell by whom. I said, I had seen Mother Wells, and to the best of my knowledge that description did not answer to her."

And then Mr. Scarrat's account of the identification of the gipsy.

"She [Elizabeth Canning] was brought into the parlour, supported by two men. I was in the parlour then. We made them all sit down, that is, the people that were taken up. The room was full of neighbours and people that went down: Susannah Wells was on the left hand of the fire, and Mary Squires sitting by the fire, with her head and knees together. Canning looked very hard at her; and whether anybody bid her look up, I can't say; but she fixed upon her, and said, 'That is the woman that cut off my stays,' and pointed to her. The gipsy got up and said, 'Dear madam, don't swear my precious life away.' Canning said, 'I know you very well, I know you too well, to my sorrow.' She was asked if she knew anybody else in the room, and if she knew a young man, which was George Squires. She said she did not say she did. She pointed to the gipsy's daughter and Virtue Hall, and said, the young woman, meaning the gipsy's daughter was leaning on the dresser when her stays were cut off, and Virtue Hall was standing by her when she went into the room. She was then carried up the stairs that front the door. I saw in her one room, but did not in the first she

went into; that was the last she went into there. Coming downstairs, she said there was another room; when she came into the kitchen the door was shut; she said, ' Through that door is the place where I was confined '; then the door was opened and she went up."

" Were you one of the first that went up ? "

" No, I was not. I saw her there with a black jug in her hand. She said that was in the room. She looked round and found a tobacco mould, and said that was there when she was there. She said, an old cask and a saddle or two she left there."

And not one of these things did our odd Elizabeth mention, when she laid her information before Alderman Chitty, a day or two after her return.

Then Mr. Davy cross-examining Robert Scarrat.

" Do you know Wells's house ? "

" I do, by passing and re-passing."

" Had you ever been in her house before January 1753 ? "

Mr. Morton (Canning's Counsel): " Though you should stigmatize yourself, let not the truth go undiscovered."

Scarrat: " I have been there."

Mr. Morton: " How long ago is it that you was in her house ? "

Scarrat: " It is some years ago."

Mr. Davy resumes his cross-examination.

" How often was you there, and when ? "

" I was there once or twice, about four or five years ago."

"With whom?"

"With two or three friends."

"Men or women?"

"Men."

"Were there no women?"

"No."

"Did you never take a girl there?"

"No, never in my life."

"When was the first time you was in the hay-loft?"

"I never was in it, till the time I went down with the girl and them." (1st February 1753.)

"What rooms in the house had you been in before?"

"The kitchen and parlour and no other."

"Were you never above stairs?"

"No, never before in my life, till I went down with them, and they were taken in custody. I never knowed there was such a room as the place where the prisoner was till then."

This reply seems likely to be true. One hesitates—life has infinite possibilities—but it seems probable that if Mr. Scarrat, in pursuit of amorous adventure, had ever been in the hay-loft, Elizabeth Canning would have given a much better description of the place.

"How came you to pitch upon Mother Wells's?" asks Mr. Davy.

"I judged it might be that house, because I didn't know any house on that road so likely."

"Did you make that reply before you asked any questions?"

"I said that, when she said she had been on the Hertfordshire road." . . .

" Had you any acquaintance with Mrs. Canning or her daughter ? "

" No, I had not."

" What led you to go to the Canning's house, having no acquaintance ? "

" A maid-servant came into the house where I bedded and boarded, and said, ' Betty Canning is come home, Betty Canning is come home ! ' which was the cause of my going there."

The cross-examination becomes very keen. Under it, Scarrat acknowledges that he never thought of suggesting to the girl particulars of the Enfield Wash house that he knew were not there, in order to be quite sure that she had been there. And Mr. Scarrat breaks down, rather badly, over the point of Elizabeth's recognizing the place of her confinement. He seems to be unaware that when the girl was brought to the house on 1st February, she was first led into the kitchen, where she stayed some time. But she never pointed to the door that led to the hay-loft. She said nothing about it. It was only after she had identified Mary Squires and had seen every other room in the house, and had been taken back into the kitchen, that she thought of the door that led to the short flight of steps giving on the loft. So Counsel:

" If you had been with her in the kitchen before, and the door had been open, and she had not fixed upon the room, and after that had been carried to all the other rooms in the house, should you not have doubted her veracity ? "

" I don't doubt, but she would have fixed upon that room at first."

"Attend to the question. Supposing it had happened, as I have put it, whether that would have led you to doubt her sincerity?"

"I should."

And as to Scarrat's evidence, as given at the trial of the gipsy. The man was present at the laying of the information before Alderman Chitty: did he swear at the trial that the girl's statements at the information and at the trial were the same? Mr. Scarrat, feebly, replies that the one corroborated the other, "to the best of my knowledge."

"Did you ever hear her mention any hay in your life?"

"I never did."

And yet at the trial of Mary Squires, Canning said, "there was nothing but hay to lie upon"; and Scarrat said he was in Court the whole time of the trial.

"Did you, or did you not, tell Mr. Alderman Chitty the person she described could not be Mother Wells?"

"I did not mention such a thing to him." . . .

"Were you not sure that it could not be Mother Wells, according to Canning's description?"

"No, I was not. I said it might not be her."

. . . .

"How did she describe the room, when you went down with her?"

"To the best of my knowledge, she said it was a long, darkish room, but I am not positive; but I am positive she said it was a long, darkish room, before she went down."

"Where did she say that?"

"I believe before Alderman Chitty; if she did not there, it was in her mother's house."

But Elizabeth had said that it was a little, square, dark room—before her visit to Enfield Wash.

Then followed questions which are curious about Scarrat's whereabouts as to the night of 1st January 1753; but nothing in particular comes of them. These are suggestions that Scarrat was, in fact, the abductor of Canning; and there were other suggestions that he had infected the girl with syphilis; but nothing is proved. And again, as to Scarrat's acquaintance with Mother Wells.

"How long have you been acquainted with Mother Wells?"

"It is four or five years ago."

"Have you been in her house, since you left Mr. Snee's service?"

"No, not in her house nor near her house since; that is three years ago."

"Had you never a quarrel with Mother Wells?"

"No."

"Upon your oath, did you never threaten that you would be revenged on her?"

"No; upon my oath, I never expressed any such words."

Perhaps not; or perhaps Mr. Davy had received a hint from Mrs. Wells. But the threat, if there had been a threat, had been uttered in private, and the word of Susannah Wells, an infamous person, would have carried no weight.

And then a piece of cross-examination, which is a type and forerunner of a cross-examination that occurred in a trial amongst the Immortals.

"How often have you been in the house of Mother Wells?"

"I have once or twice."

"Will you venture to swear that you have not been there oftener than twice?"

"I may have been there two or three times."

"Have you been there no more than three times upon your oath?"

"I cannot say whether I have or have not; I have called, maybe, three or four times, I don't know."

"Upon your oath, have you not been there five times."

"I don't know; I cannot say how many times."

"Will you take upon you to say, you have not been there six times?"

"No."

"Upon your oath, will you take upon you to say, you never was there ten times in your life?"

"No, I never was."

"Will you swear you have not been there eight times?"

"I believe I have not."

"Are you positive of that?"

"I believe I could swear I was never there eight times in my life."

Many years later, Mr. Nathaniel Winkle was asked by Mr. Skimpin whether he knew the plaintiff in Bardell and Pickwick.

" ' I don't know her; I've seen her.'

" ' Oh, you don't know her, but you've seen her ? Now, have the goodness to tell the gentlemen of the jury what you mean by *that*, Mr. Winkle.'

" ' I mean that I am not intimate with her, but I have seen her when I went to call on Mr. Pickwick in Goswell Street.'

" ' How often have you seen her, sir ? '

" ' How often ? '

" ' Yes, Mr. Winkle, how often ? I'll repeat the question for you a dozen times, if you require it, sir.' . . .

" On this question there arose the edifying, brow-beating, customary on such points. First of all, Mr. Winkle said it was impossible for him to say how many times he had seen Mrs. Bardell. Then he was asked if he had seen her twenty times, to which he replied, ' Certainly—more than that.' Then he was asked whether he hadn't seen her a hundred times—whether he couldn't swear that he had seen her more than fifty times—whether he didn't know that he had seen her at least seventy-five times—and so forth—— "

Mrs. Myers, a neighbour, and an old friend of the Canning family, was called next. She was sent for at once on Elizabeth's return. She said that she found Elizabeth sitting by the fireside " in a very black, dirty, bad condition; her face, arms, and hands were black; I took it to be a cold, or numbness occasioned by cold."

" How was she dressed ? "

" She had a black quilted petticoat on, all

torn about the knees; she had a bedgown on, and a rag about her head; I believe it was a muslin half-handkerchief."

And then Mrs. Myers relates the story which Elizabeth told her that night; very much the same story that we have heard before, more in general outline than in particular. Then the details appear in the course of the examination.

"What did she tell you was in the room?"

"She told me there was hay there; and a pitcher with water in it, she believed about a gallon of it; and that there was a fireplace in it, and about the value of a quartern loaf of bread in pieces."

"Did she say there was a grate in the room?"

"She did; and that she took the bedgown and rag out of the grate in the room."

And as to the incident of the bleeding ear: Elizabeth told Mrs. Myers that she tore her ear in getting out of her prison, and Mrs. Myers testified that she looked at the ear and there appeared to be "a great scratch; there was a great deal of blood appeared to be fresh, and dropped of blood (while I was there) upon her shoulder." And the affair of the name, upon which so much was to turn:

"She said while she was in the room, there was a staircase lay close to the room, and she heard people run up and down in the nights, and she heard the name of Mother Wills, or Mother Wells, mentioned."

"Had Scarrat spoke to her before she said Mother Wills or Wells?"

"I don't know that he had."

" If he had spoke to her should you have known it ? "

" I should; I did not hear him speak to her at all then."

Again one must note that it is strange that Elizabeth knew the name of Wills or Wells on the 29th of January; and knew of no name when she appeared before Alderman Chitty on 31st January.

As to this journey to Enfield: Mrs. Myers rode in the chaise with the two Cannings and a Mrs. Garrat. She described how Mr. Adamson rode back to meet them.

" Did he say anything to the girl ? "

" He said to her, ' Bet, what sort of a room was you in ? ' She said, ' Sir, it is an odd sort of room, there is hay and a fireplace in it.' He said again, ' What do you say ? Is there hay in it, Bet ? ' That is all he said, and went away directly."

A description of the identification follows, in loose and general terms. But here is a point:

" Did the description she had given of the old woman she told you of on the 29th at night tally with the old woman when you saw her ? "

" Indeed, it did."

But Mrs. Myers had said nothing of any description at all. She said that Elizabeth had told her that she had been robbed by an elderly woman. Certainly, the gipsy was elderly, and so Mrs. Myers might contend that Elizabeth's description of her was exact in every particular. Then, when the party was in the loft, Mrs. Myers said that Elizabeth " took her foot, and

put the hay away, and showed the gentlemen two holes, and said, they were in the floor, when she was in it before."

" Had you heard her mention them two holes before ? "

" No, I never did."

And it is tolerably certain that Elizabeth had not said a word about these holes to anyone. The cross-examination and re-examination of Mrs. Myers did not lead to much; except that one of Canning's counsel asked her about the description of the woman who stole the stays, the description that tallied so exactly with the appearance of the gipsy. And it appeared that Elizabeth had described the thief as " a tall, black, swarthy woman."

Mrs. Woodward, another of the women who were summoned on the night of Canning's return, gave evidence of what the girl told her of her misadventure. The Woodward version corresponds in general with the other versions, save in this point: that Mrs. Woodward did not hear Elizabeth mention any name whatever. And as to the bedgown: Mrs. Woodward emphatically declared that Mrs. Canning " never had such a thing on her back in all her life." And Mrs. Woodward was also emphatic in her belief that Elizabeth was dangerously ill when she came home, and was still dangerously ill a week later. Cross-examined; this witness has a theory of Elizabeth's ear, which may possibly deserve consideration: " the handkerchief was all bloody; it bled so, that it shocked me, I could not look at it; it was very cold weather, and the blood had

congealed and was thick upon her ear; and sitting by the fire, I fancy, that made her bleed afresh." And as to the shift in which Elizabeth came home: Mrs. Mayle, the midwife, it will be remembered had expressed grave doubts as to that shift having been worn for a month—in a room, be it said, that was filthily dirty, full of old cobwebs and nastiness, as one of the witnesses put it. But to Mr. Gascoyne's question: "Was it as dirty as if it had been worn by a person that was dragged from London to Enfield Wash, and lay upon hay so long afterwards?" Mrs. Woodward replied boldly: "Yes, it was."

John Wintlebury was Elizabeth's former master. He gave the Cannings, mother and daughter, an excellent character. He had known the daughter, he believed, twelve years; "she is a very sober girl as any I know; and I believe the whole neighbourhood will say so. She lived with me about eighteen months (till) about three or four months before this happened. She always behaved herself in a very sober manner. I keep a public-house. I have a back room, where she would commonly be. She very seldom came forward."

Mr. Wintlebury describes, as so many others described, the scene of Elizabeth's home-coming.

"When I came into the room, I met with ten or a dozen people; there was the girl, in a very bad condition, with a handkerchief wrapped about her head, and, I think, it was bloody on one side."

And so forth; the recognition of the Hertfordshire coach and the rest of it. Then:

" Then I said, ' Pray can you tell me whose house you were at ? ' She said, ' I cannot; but I heard the name Wills, or Wells, by people below stairs.' " . . .

" Do you recollect that Scarrat mentioned Wills or Wells to her ? "

" To the best of my knowledge, he did not."

No doubt, the scene in Mrs. Canning's room was one of infinite confusion. The ten or a dozen people all talked at once; the men growled heavily, the women squawked like macaws. It would have been most difficult for a clear-headed observer to say surely who said this, who said that. Hence, nothing much is to be concluded from the fact that Scarrat was quite sure that he mentioned the name Wells first, while other witnesses declare that " Wills or Wells " came in the first place from stricken Elizabeth. It is highly probable that, in this instance at all events, Scarrat was telling the truth; but it does not necessarily follow that, in this especial instance, the other witnesses were liars. Very few people can analyse hysterical hubbub. Mr. Wintlebury was one of those who trooped up to Enfield on 1st February, and tells his tale of the expedition. He was asked whether Elizabeth could have seen Mary Squires's face before she identified her, and he answers:

" She saw a little of her face, I suppose. There were about eight or nine people round the fire. The old gipsy had a little pipe in her hand, sitting crouching, with her head and her knees together; and as Canning looked round, she said, ' That is the woman that cut my stays off,"

And as to Canning's tour round the house:

"Then Canning was carried upstairs, and did not fix upon any of the rooms: I think there are three of them; they were going to carry her farther, and she said, 'I was not carried so high; I did not go up above four, five or six steps at the most.'"

"Whom did she say so to?"

"She said so to me. Upon this she was brought into the kitchen again, and the hayloft door was open, and she went up there and looked about her, and said, 'This is the room in which I was confined.'"

Here is one of the chief enormities of the Canning myth. By her account she had been in two rooms in Susannah Wells's house, before the official visit of 1st February. One was the kitchen, where she refused the offer of guilty splendour, and suffered the loss of her stays. The other room was the loft, with the door and the short flight of steps giving on the kitchen. Elizabeth said that the gipsy had pushed her past that door and shut it on her.

Well: Elizabeth returns with her posse on 1st February. She is taken forthwith into the kitchen, with the fatal door before her. She stays some time in the kitchen. She says not a word about the door that led to the place of her imprisonment. She allows herself to be taken up the main staircase of the house which, by her own tale, she had never seen—for I do not think there was a light in Mother Wells's hall at four o'clock in the morning. And there were more steps than four, five or six in that staircase.

FROM A PRINT DATED MARCH, 1753

Nevertheless, with the full knowledge (as her case assumes) that she had been pushed up a short flight of steps leading from the kitchen, she climbs these longer, totally unknown stairs from the hall, and suffers herself to be taken into three rooms in succession, before she makes the remark about the four, five or six steps. Even then, she does not say: " the place where I was confined is entered by a door in the kitchen." But why didn't she say this, if not when she was taken on her coming into this kitchen where she was robbed; at least after she had climbed the main stairs and had looked into the three rooms ? Here is a puzzle indeed; for according to her own witnesses she had related these particulars when she returned home. Thus, Mrs. Myers reporting Elizabeth Returned: " the old woman . . . opened a door and shoved her up a pair of stairs into a room." See also Robert Scarrat on the Identification Scene. Elizabeth is in the parlour at Mrs. Wells's. " She pointed to the gipsy's daughter and Virtue Hall, and said, the young woman, meaning the gipsy's daughter, was leaning on the dresser when her stays were cut off." So she knew that the room from which her prison was entered was a kitchen; since dressers were only found in kitchens in the eighteenth century. So Mary Woodward on Elizabeth's story in its first state: the old woman " went to a dresser or dresser-drawer, and took a knife . . . and turned her up a pair of stairs into this place where she was confined."

Now turn to Canning's deposition made on

31st January, before Alderman Chitty. This, be it remembered, was before Elizabeth went on her journey of identification to Enfield Wash. There are marked variations from her later story, from the tales told by her witnesses.

"There were several persons in the room; they said, she must do as they did, and if so, she should have fine clothes, etc. She said she would not . . . and then a woman forced her upstairs into a room, and, with a case knife she had in her hand, cut the lace of her stays, etc."

Now, all this is highly curious and significant. It gives the answer to our questions: why did Elizabeth Canning not explain on her first entry into the kitchen at Mrs. Wells's: "this is the room into which I was taken by the two men on the morning of 2nd January; this very dresser on which you have seated me was the dresser from which the woman took the knife to cut off my stays; and that door leads to a short flight of steps and the room where I was shut up"? Why did not Elizabeth say that, or words to that effect?

The answer is simple. She did not say that or anything like it, because she was a liar, and had never been in Mother Wells's house before in her life. She was making up her story as she went about the house, and was taken from room to room. The day before, at Mr. Alderman Chitty's office, the tale was incomplete. The woman who robbed her was just a woman, not an old woman, not a tall, black, swarthy old woman. There is nothing about a dresser, or a dresser-drawer; the robbery was not committed

in the room first entered, but in the place of confinement; the knife used for severing the stay-laces is not a culinary or table knife, the sort of knife that would be found on a dresser or in a dresser-drawer, but a case knife. And consider the phrase " forced her upstairs." It is quite vague, it might apply to the approach to any room in the house. It would fit the stairs leading from the kitchen to the loft—Elizabeth had not found out then that these stairs were only four, five or six—it would fit the ordinary house stairs, facing the front door. Thus it was that Elizabeth said nothing when she was taken into Mrs. Wells's kitchen on 1st February; thus it was that she made no objection when she was taken up the stairs into the three bedrooms.

But those witnesses of hers; Mrs. Myers, Mrs. Woodward, and Mr. Scarrat ? According to them, Elizabeth had told the story of the kitchen, the door in it, and the loft, on the night of her return; two days before the Chitty deposition. According to them, she had given a minute description of Mary Squires, who, two days later, is just " a woman." I am afraid there is only one solution of this difficulty, and that is, that these witnesses were deliberate—and infernal—liars.

IX

It has just been observed that the two women, Myers and Woodward, and the man Scarrat, were undoubted liars. I am not sure that we can say this of Mr. Wintlebury. He did not say that Elizabeth had told him of an old woman who took a knife from a dresser-drawer; there was nothing about the door in the kitchen, the short stairs or the loft in his recollections of the girl's talk. He may very possibly have spoken the truth, when he reported Elizabeth as having said to him at Mrs. Wells's, " I was not carried so high," etc. For I believe that there were opportunities in the course of the Wells raid for a little judicious prompting on the part of Mr. Scarrat.

The next witness was Joseph Adamson. He was one of the Enfield Raiders, and a somewhat notable member of that very odd party. He had known E. Canning, he said, for eleven or twelve years. Scarrat, he said, was a stranger to him up to 1st February. The Wintlebury-Scarrat-Adamson section, all on horseback, were the first arrivals at Enfield Wash. Adamson said that he was told that he must go back and prevent the chaise—with Elizabeth in it—from stopping; otherwise, I suppose, hurry it up.

" Did you tell Canning there was hay in the room ? "

" I did not, either directly or indirectly from

first to last. . . . I asked what sort of a place she was confined in ? She said, an odd or a wild sort of a place; some hay and something else which I can't remember; I think it was a chimney in the corner. . . . I rode on; and as her master Mr. Lyon and others were going from the ale-house to Mother Wells's, I hallooed to them and told them what the girl had told me, that is, that there was some hay in the room, and a fireplace or a chimney, I can't tell which. When she came down, I took her out of the chaise and set her on a dresser; she sat there six, seven or eight minutes."

" Did she make any observations there ? "

" She did not. Then we took her into the room where they all were (there was a room full of people); she turned herself round by the door, till she came to where Mary Squires sat, and said, ' That is the woman that cut my stays off.' "

Compare this with the evidence given by Adamson at the trial of Mary Squires. There he said: " I . . . carried her out of the chaise into the kitchen, and set her on the dresser, and ordered all the people to be brought to her, to see if she knew any of them. . . . Upon seeing Mary Squires, she said, ' That is the woman that cut my stays off.' "

The discrepancy is curious. And still more curious is the evidence that followed.

" After this she was carried up the great stairs, and at the bottom, she said, ' I believe this is the staircase.' "

Now there is only one interpretation to be

put upon this most interesting remark of Elizabeth's. She meant—she could mean nothing else —" this is the staircase up which I was forced into a room by a woman "—see evidence given before Alderman Chitty. And thus our theory, that she was making up her tale as she went along, is amply confirmed. Naturally, therefore, the next thing to do was to go up this staircase, and so:

" We went upstairs into every room (I believe there are four of them). She said ' None of them is the room.' "

She was forced to say so. She had described the place of her imprisonment to the Alderman. None of the rooms that she now viewed would fit the description: there were beds in them, and it was a great point in Elizabeth's tale that she had been obliged to lie on the bare boards. But to continue Mr. Adamson's story:

" Then she was brought down again, and we took her through the kitchen and up the stairs into the hay-loft. She paused a little before she spoke; and the first word I remember she said was, ' There is more hay than there was (as I remember) in the room.' . . . I walked then directly between her and the casement, and turned round, and set my back against the casement, and said, ' If you have been confined in this room so long, you will be able to give a very good account of it, and I expect you will.' She said, ' That was nailed up when I was here.' ' What, boarded up ? ' said I. ' No,' said she, ' but I tried to open it and could not.' She described fields, and a hill at a distance, and

some trees; but the most remarkable thing was, some houses to be seen on the left-hand side the lane."

This does not strike me as highly remarkable. Elizabeth Canning came in a chaise; it is quite possible, nay, probable, that she looked out of the window as the chaise went very slowly on its way; it is possible and probable that she looked about her curiously enough when the chaise stopped before Mrs. Wells's house. Further, Elizabeth Canning had been in the loft some time, five or six minutes, before Mr. Adamson stood with his back to the window; it is, again, possible and probable that Elizabeth glanced out of the window, while Adamson was busying himself, as he said, with the hay. Decidedly, the circumstance is of small significance.

Mr. Davy cross-examined Adamson on the business of the two staircases; the main staircase of the house, and the few steps from the kitchen to the loft.

" When she was gone from the kitchen—Mr. Davy meant ' parlour,' I think—to the staircase of the house, what did she say there ? "

" She said at the bottom of it, she believed that was it."

" How many stairs were there ? "

" I cannot tell; there is a hatch or door on the top stair."

" Upon your oath could she not see the whole flight of stairs up from the bottom, where she then stood ? "

" Upon my oath, I cannot tell whether she could or not."

" Was that staircase anything like the few little steps that lead up into the hay-loft ? "

" There is a very great deal of difference."

" Did you ask her how she could make that mistake ? "

" I did; and said, ' You see you was once mistaken in the staircase.' "

" What was this in answer to ? "

" She had said, ' That was the corner where the girl stood and laughed at me, when my stays were cut off '; which she said afterwards was Virtue Hall."

Next; the question arose as to whether Mr. Adamson really and effectually obscured the view by standing in front of the window; and as I think I observed earlier in this volume, to go into that matter thoroughly one should be acquainted with Mr. Adamson's dimensions; and, so far as I know, no survey was ever taken of him. But he was asked:

" Did you fill the window so that she could not possibly see trees ? "

" I stood so near her that I believe she could not see out of the window."

" Are you sure she could not see trees ? "

" I believe she could not."

" Were you close to the window ? "

" No, not close to that, but close before her; which I think would answer the end, to prevent her looking out, better."

" How far was she from the window ? "

" She might be two or three yards from it, and I a yard and a half."

" Was the window boarded ? "

" It was not. I asked her the question; she said it had not been boarded up."

" Did you ever see a window in the country, where there have been no hills to be seen out of it ? "

" Yes, I have, upon the sea coasts."

An interesting question by Baron Legge, one of the judges. The window from which Elizabeth said she had seen the Hertfordshire coach was boarded up, when the girl and her friends went up to the loft. Mr. Adamson and Mr. Colley, Elizabeth's uncle, pulled the board down. The judge asked:

" Could you have seen the Hertfordshire coach go by, as the board was then up ? "

" I might, as it was light over the board, had I looked over it."

" Were there any cracks big enough in the board to look through ? "

" I cannot say there were."

We are left here in darkness. Adamson meant, we are to presume, that there was a clear space between the top of the board, and the top of the window; through this clear space, he infers, a view of the country might be obtained. But no judgment can be made from these details. One would have to know the height of the window from the floor, the height of the boarding, the general lie of the land, the exact position of the Hertfordshire road in the landscape, before saying that this road was visible or was not visible from the space above the boarding.

The next witness was a gentleman with the

odd and important name of Sutherton Bakler, apothecary, of Aldermanbury Postern. It was he who was called in, the day after Canning's return. He said:

"I found her in a very low and weak condition. She was so extremely low that I could scarcely hear her speak. She was in bed, with cold, clammy sweats upon her. She complained of being faint and sick at times, with a pain in her bowels; and complained of having been costive all the time of her confinement. I ordered her a purging medicine; but her stomach was too weak, and could not bear the medicine she took. Finding that, I ordered a glyster to be administered on the 30th, in the evening."

Further details as to glysters and purges and their results; till on the 6th February, a physician, Dr. Eaton, was summoned.

"How long was she before she had her health tolerably?"

"He (Dr. Eaton) prescribed diuretic medicines and gentle cathartics . . . and she was tolerably well in about a month. Her face appeared very wan. Her face used to be of a remarkable red complexion; but her colour was quite gone, and her arms of a livid colour, spotted. I had known her some years." . . .

"What may you imagine those symptoms you saw upon her to be owing to?"

"I don't know that: she was very much emaciated and wasted, from what she was when I saw her before."

"Do you think the confinement you have heard of would not occasion it?"

" To be sure, by living upon what she says, she must be very much wasted. . . ."

" Had she any appearance of a woman that had been brought to bed ? "

" She looked like a person half-starved, in a weak, wasting, decaying way: but what was the cause of it, I do not know."

Finally, cross-examined, Mr. Bakler said that the girl's arms were black and livid, and her nails looked of a sort of bluish cast.

Dr. Eaton, the physician, was called. He said:

" I found her in a very weak condition and was very apprehensive she would die: she appeared to me to be in very great danger for a few days." . . .

" Did you see any signs of an imposture ? " —malingering, we should say.

" No, I saw none at all. . . . I found she was costive to a very great degree. . . . It was seven or eight days before the danger began to be over." . . .

" Have you not had objects under your care in salivations ? "

" I have."

" Whether that does not leave very remarkable symptoms in the mouth, throat and breath ? "

" Yes; it does for some time after."

" Was there the least symptom of this ? "

" Oh, nothing like it, nothing like it, I'll assure you, nothing like it in the world; it was nothing like coming out of a salivation." . . .

" If you had not been told the real case, what should you have imagined it to have been ? "

"I can't but say, the case corresponded with a person, that had suffered hunger, thirst, and cold, and great hardship."

Mr. Davy cross-examines Dr. Eaton. Firstly, as to the state of Elizabeth's bowels, of which, I am sure, we are all weary; and then, as to her pulse:

"She had a singular pulse," the doctor answered. "I was afraid of her falling into a fever, and I ordered that which was material for a fever."

"Had you never a patient in this condition before?"

"Many."

"Did all their disorders proceed from hunger, thirst, and cold?"

"No. She was weak and emaciated, and her stomach weak. . . . I formed my opinion from what I found, a low, flashing pulse, and fluttering. Everything corresponded to what they said; and therefore I had no reason to disbelieve the story."

Some wrangling between Counsel and the physician follows. Counsel wants to know whether such a condition as Elizabeth's might not proceed from other causes than hunger, thirst, and cold; and physician, not too clearly, puts the case as follows:

"It—Elizabeth's condition—may proceed from another cause, as when in a fever a person's stomach is taken away, then that cause of hunger comes not by force, but because they can't eat; but the consequence was such, it must proceed from her having lost her appetite some

way or other. A person may lose their appetite by a fever, or by force. It is plain she had not eat for some time."

Both the matter and the manner are oddly involved; but I suppose the doctor meant to say that there are two ways of becoming emaciated; starvation without fever, and starvation as the result of fever.

Next, comes a brief chapter relating to Elizabeth Canning being seen going to Enfield Wash at the beginning of January and returning from Enfield Wash at the end of January. The first witness was Robert Beals, who kept the Stamford Hill turnpike, "in Tottenham Road, towards Enfield." He said that about the middle of February 1753, he heard the story of Elizabeth, heard it from his little children, who had brought the tale from school.

"I said upon hearing this, I believed I was at the gate when the poor girl came by."

"Give an account of what you saw."

"About the fore end of January, I was standing at the gate between ten and eleven, or nearly eleven at night; it was a very calm, still, night; I heard something of a sobbing, crying voice; it came from towards Newington, going towards Tottenham; and first I saw nobody; I stood still; it came nearer me."

"How far off do you imagine it to be, when you heard the sobbing at first?"

"It may be two or three hundred yards. At last I perceived there were more than one. As they came near, I saw there were two men, and a young person, seemingly from her voice. I

had a large candle burning (the stile is at the end of the turnpike over the way). As soon as they got up to the light, I saw them more plain. One man was taller than the other. They went towards the stile; one, the foremost, began to say, 'Come along, you bitch, you are drunk'; that was said when the candle began to shine upon them. I put myself a little farther out without-side the posts, that they might see me. The woman seemed not willing to go along with them, by her crying and sobbing, but never spoke a word. The man behind made a sort of a laugh, and said, 'Damn the bitch, how drunk she is!' When they came up to the stile, the tall one got over first, and the hindmost lifted her over by either one leg or both legs; she came down upright on the other side; then she hung back, and fell upon her breech upon the step, and cried bitterly. I thought she would go no further. As I thought they could see me, I expected she would have said something to me; but she did not speak a word. He before plucked her up by the hands, and said, 'Damn you, you bitch, come along, you are drunk'; the other came on the other side of her, and they went away together; he laughed and said, 'Damn the bitch, how drunk she is!' he that came over last jostled her along. I could see them some way after they got over the stile. One of them never let go her hand all the time I saw them."

"From what you heard, did you think she was a person in distress?"

"I did; she burst out afresh with sobbing, going off."

And then further examination discloses the fact that Robert Beals cannot swear to the date of this queer circumstance. He "really believes" that it happened at the beginning of January; but the word "beginning" is not defined by him or by the Counsel; it may mean the first day, or the first week. He is asked:

"Why did you not attempt to give her your assistance?"

"There were two men with her, and we are fearful in our business; except they ask us any questions, we never meddle with such; and I was then alone."

Cross-examination elicits from Mr. Beals the fact that the woman was walking on her feet, "and went pretty fast."

"Did you imagine she was in a fit of convulsions?"

"No, sir, I took her to be in liquor." . . .

"Had she a gown on?"

"I think she had, I durst say she had, or else I should have taken more notice of it."

"Did she keep crying all the time?"

"She did."

"Was it crying or screaming?"

"It was only sobbing and crying."

Then as to that vague date, "the beginning of January."

"Is it not a custom in your parish, on New Year's Day, to wish one another a Happy New Year?"

"Yes, sir, it is."

"Do you remember this morning you had wished any of your neighbours such?"

"No, I do not; indeed, I don't remember what day it was."

That settles the question of the date. Mr. Beals, an honest man, with a very pretty gift of description—"it was a very calm, still night; I heard something of a sobbing, crying voice"—hadn't a notion of the date of his odd experience, and says so.

But in any case; his evidence would have no bearing whatever on the business of Elizabeth Canning. The girl, it will be remembered, said she was subject to fits, that a blow on the temple from one of the rude men sent her into one of these fits, and that she knew nothing till she came to herself on the high road, with water near it, that is at Enfield Wash. She had been totally unconscious, that is, for six hours. Her account of her fits was amply confirmed by her mother, who declared that during these seizures Elizabeth was no more sensible than a new-born babe.

Very good: and utterly irreconcilable with Beals's account of the woman he saw. An unconscious person cannot walk, fast or slow. An unconscious person does not cry bitterly. An unconscious person exhibits neither willingness nor unwillingness to stay still or go on; an unconscious person cannot be kept upright by a mere grasp of the hand. Elizabeth Canning was, probably, about seven or eight stone in weight. Her capacities, then, for progression or expression of any kind or sort, in her unconscious state, as described by herself and her mother, would be precisely those of a seven or eight-stone

sack of potatoes. She could be dragged along the road by the men, her feet rasping along the ground, she could be carried by one or both of them: but it would not be of the faintest use to endeavour to "jostle" her along, it would not be of the faintest use to give her a hand; any more than it would be of use to jostle a sack of potatoes, or to give *that* a hand. Finally; the woman seen by Beals wore, he said, "lightish clothes": Elizabeth's going away dress was a purple gown worn over a black petticoat. It was certainly not Elizabeth Canning whom Robert Beals saw on that calm, still night, early in January.

And now come the people who thought they saw Elizabeth making her way to London, after the escape of 29th January. Thomas Bennet, of Enfield, was the first witness. He was coming home from his shop near Mrs. Wells's house on the 29th of January 1753, between four and five of the afternoon.

"There was a miserable, poor wretch to look to, in the gravel-pit gateway, a five-acre field near the ten-mile stone. . . . She had neither gown, not stays, nor cap, nor hat on, only a ragged, dirty thing, a half-handkerchief like, and a bit of something that reached down below her waist, and no apron on, and her hands lay before her; she was coming in at that five-acre gateway . . . about a quarter of a mile on this side of Mrs. Wells's. She asked me the way to London; I told her; she said she was affrighted by the tanner's dog." The witness duly fixes the date by certain transactions as to making his son apprentice.

David Dyer, of Enfield Wash, was standing at his door, chopping rotten bushes, three evenings before Mrs. Wells and her family were taken up.

" About four in the evening I saw a poor, distressed creature come by me out of the common field from Mrs. Wells's-ward, for London."

—A curious addition to the language ! We have forward, backward, toward, froward and the rest; and this good man adds his contribution to the family—

. . . " She was a shortish sort of a woman, and had a shortish sort of a thing about her, it did not come very low about her. I looked at her face as she came by me: I said ' Sweetheart, do you want a husband ? ' She did not speak to me."

" Stand up, Elizabeth Canning. Look upon her, is that the same person ? "

" I have seen her betwixt that time and this; this is the young woman, I think, that passed me by at the gateway; I do believe this is she."

Mr. Davy shakes David Dyer to some extent. It will be remembered that, by the evidence of all the witnesses who saw the girl on the night of her return, and the day after, she was a horrible object. The apprentice said that at first he did not recognize her: she was black and blue, she looked as if she had been bruised and beaten, her very nails were bluish. David Dyer saw nothing of this. As has been seen, he made very frank proposals to the girl—one hardly gathers that his word " husband " implied the Sacrament of Matrimony—and in his

cross-examination he acknowledged that he took particular notice of her, that he "looked at her very wishfully." "Wishfully" means, I think, curiously. She was pale, he said, and walked slowly and "looked as if she wanted some good victuals." But she was clearly not the terrible figure that returned that night to Aldermanbury Postern. I do not think that the Faculty would allow that such a change could be produced by a ten-mile walk. And as to identification:

"Are you sure the prisoner is she?"

"I am pretty sure; I am pretty positive; I will not be punctual."

The phrases are almost worthy of Shakespeare's clowns; but the evidence is not convincing.

Mary Cobb, who follows, has a pleasant set of place names in her preamble.

"I live in Silver Street, at Edmonton; I was going home from Tanners End; I was in Ducks Fields, just at the setting-in of daylight (as much as I can remember) on the 29th of January."

"On a Monday night, I met a person; she had a handkerchief pinned over her head, it almost hid her face; she had a black petticoat and an old bedgown on; it was either a quilted thing, or it was a printed or flowered thing; the flowers seemed to be faded. She wrapped her arms in it. The first sight I had of her, she was getting over a stile, and looked at me, and made a slip, but did not fall; she came up directly towards me, and looked at me and I at her: I was afraid, and moved slowly. I turned about as she came up to me, and looked at her: I thought she

would have asked me charity; I put my hand in my pocket, and had no halfpence. . . . I perceived her to have a young face. She appeared to be in a very wretched, miserable condition as ever I saw a person in all my life. She walked creeping along."

And in cross-examination Mrs. Cobb added that this person " looked very dismal and black, in a dirty way."

Now Mrs. Cobb says that she met the person between the five and six milestones from London; that is, about halfway between Enfield Wash and London. Then four or five miles of walking had imparted that dismal blackness which was not apparent to David Dyer. Mary Cobb's identification was of much the same tentative character as Dyer's.

" Look at Elizabeth Canning now, there she stands."

" The size answers; I firmly believe this to be the same person, by the tip of her nose; that bears some resemblance to the person I saw."

" Have you any reason to believe this is not she ? "

" No, I have not."

But, apart from all this, the evidence of Mary Cobb yields most interesting results, both considered in itself, and as compared with the testimony of David Dyer.

First: her evidence in itself. Mr. Willes, cross-examining, tried to make Mrs. Cobb furnish a time-table of her movements on the afternoon of 29th January 1753. Mrs. Cobb

was a dressmaker, or mantua maker, and on this day she set out at 3 p.m. to take a child's vest to Mrs. Carter's, at Tanners End. Mrs. Cobb's house was about a mile from Mrs. Carter's; and Mrs. Cobb calculated that she could walk the distance in about a quarter of an hour. Very good; she arrives at Mrs. Carter's at 3.15. Mrs. Carter is out, and Mrs. Cobb leaves her " errand," otherwise the vest, and comes away, neither stopping nor staying, as she says herself. However, we will allow her ten minutes to make quite sure that Mrs. Carter isn't at home, and say that she starts back at 3.25. But on her way back, being, as she says, in a public way of business, she meets people, three or four people, and was delayed. Let us allow her twenty minutes for these talks by the way; that will bring us to 3.45; let us even say 4 p.m. She herself declared that she met the " person " a quarter of an hour after she left Mrs. Carter's; but ladies sometimes talk longer than they think: four o'clock is a handsome allowance; but let us stretch a point, and make it 4.15.

But: Elizabeth Canning, giving evidence at the trial of Mary Squires, said:

" I got out about four o'clock in the afternoon on a Monday."

And David Dyer, the witness preceding Mrs. Cobb, had just sworn:

" About four in the evening I saw a poor, distressed creature come by me, out of the common field," etc. And this poor creature was walking very slowly.

David Dyer saw this poor creature at a point

ten miles from London. Mrs. Cobb saw her poor creature at a point between five and six miles from London; "creeping along." But even if the poor creature had been a champion walker, she could not have done four and a half miles in a quarter of an hour.

We may, therefore, dismiss Mrs. Cobb and her evidence as entirely worthless. And so, summing up this section of the case, there is nothing to show that Elizabeth Canning was seen going to Enfield Wash, or seen returning from it.

X

THE next branch of the evidence is concerned with the attempt of the defence to upset the Squires's alibi; that is the testimony of the Dorset people, who swore that old Mary, her son George, and her daughter Lucy were at Abbotsbury on 2nd January, and remained at Abbotsbury till 9th January. This evidence of the first two witnesses called with this intent is not very strong. The first witness was Mr. William Howard, of Enfield Wash, living "right against Wells's house." He said that he remembered "the two Edward Aldridges" coming to see him twice. He explained that of these two Edward Aldridges one was a silversmith, in Foster Lane, the other an inhabitant of Enfield Wash. The silversmith, it may be remembered, was one of the party who went down on the Enfield Raid on 1st February, thought that Canning was "mistaken" in her tale, but lacked the courage to come forward and say so, when Mary Squires was tried for her life. Well; these two Aldridges called on Mr. Howard, as he said, three or four days after the Raid. They brought with them a paper called "The Case of Elizabeth Canning," and asked for a contribution to the Canning cause. The two called again in a week's time on the same business, and on the second visit the silversmith Aldridge said that the girl did not seem clear in her descrip-

tion of the room in which she was imprisoned. Otherwise, said Mr. Howard, Aldridge appeared convinced of the truth of her story, and a warm sympathizer. Cross-examined, Howard declared that he was at Enfield Wash during the month of January 1753, and saw all the Wells family "pass and repass about their private affairs." But he can say nothing about the Squires family. The Recorder asks him:

"Do you remember your first time of seeing the gipsy?"

"I never used to take notice of them," answered Howard. It may be concluded, I think, that he had no notion that there were any gipsies at Mrs. Wells's; till the day of the Raid.

Mrs. Howard, wife of the last witness, gave her account of the first visit of the two Aldridges.

. . . "I asked Mr. Aldridge (the silversmith) what he thought of it? The answer he made was, as sure as he was alive, he was assured the girl had been used as she had said in the Case. . . . He was with me almost half an hour; and he recommended it to me and my husband to subscribe, and desired me to get my friends to do the same. . . . Within eight or ten days after he came again, and brought me another printed Case; and there was wrote at bottom, that Virtue Hall had made an information. He said it was to raise money for the girl; and if we did not assist, the gentlemen in London would not think we wanted to get rid of the bad company we had about us."

Referring back to the evidence of Aldridge under cross-examination, it seems probable that

Mrs. Howard was telling the truth. Aldridge, Nash and Hague went down to Enfield Wash, viewed Mrs. Wells's house inside and outside, and were of the opinion that Elizabeth Canning had never been there. They said as much, probably, to their acquaintances in London on their return. Then, in a day or two, the great Canning storm arose; and the three cowardly fellows hastened to put themselves on the "right" side, lest they should be denounced and ruined, as persons opposed to the pure and holy cause of Canning.

But, as to the gipsy's presence at Enfield Wash:

"Look at the woman there (Mary Squires) do you know her?"

"That is the woman, I think, I have seen pass and repass; but never was nigh her to speak to her."

"When was the first time you saw her, can you recollect?"

"The first time, to be positive, was the Sunday was se'nnight before she was taken up. I saw her, the son, and two daughters, at Mrs. Wells's door: I do think they are the same. It is a great while since; there may be an alteration; her daughter Mary used to come to our pump for water; the first time I took notice of them, my servants told me they were gipsies; then I bid them not to unbolt the door."

Mrs. Howard's "Sunday was se'nnight" date, being interpreted, is 21st January, on which day, according to the evidence of Elizabeth Edwards and Susannah Burwill, the gipsy

party was at Brentford. Still; Mrs. Howard has the air of a witness who is honestly endeavouring to speak the truth. She will not swear; she "thinks," and says so. One of the judges asks her how she is sure as to the exact date:

"I'll tell your lordship why I know it was that day; because on the Friday my servant told me she was there; and she called me out, when the girl was taking some linen off the hedges at Wells's; she was in a brown stuff gown and a speckled hat; and when she came up to the frame of my pump on the Saturday, she turned about and made me a curtsey, and I bowed to her as she went out at the gate: this was the Saturday before the Sunday of my first seeing the old woman, and son, and two daughters."

Recorder: "What time of the Sunday was it you saw them?"

"It was in the afternoon: I was told they were her son and two daughters, and I looked wishfully at them."

"Wishfully," evidently signifies "curiously." Gipsies were objects of Mrs. Howard's disapproving interest: she wanted to know exactly what they were like.

Counsel asked her whether she had seen the old woman after this: she replied that she had seen her put into the cart after she had been arrested.

"When you saw her put into the cart, so soon after you saw them at the door, did you believe it to be the same person you saw at the door?"

"Yes, I did believe it then."

And as to Mary Squires, the daughter of old Mary: Mrs. Howard is still cautious. It was Mary who came to Mrs. Howard's pump on the Saturday, Mrs. Howard thought. The distance between the two was only three or four yards: "she made me a curtsey and looked me full in the face, and I her: I think she looked fatter in the face than she does now . . ."

"From what you observed of her then, do you think her to be the same person?"

"I do; but I can't be positive."

And, then, in answer to the Recorder, Mrs. Howard had seen, as she believed, the whole group of gipsies at Mrs. Wells's door on the Sunday afternoon: at a distance of fifty or sixty yards. Mrs. Howard was short-sighted, and she was asked whether she could be positive as to her sight forty or fifty yards off.

"I was more positive," she replied, "when I saw her pass and repass, than I was on that Sunday."

"Can you be particular to the days you saw her pass and repass?"

"No; I can't, my lord."

There is some perplexity about this good woman's evidence. In the first place she identifies Mary Squires the elder as "the woman, I think, I have seen pass and repass." Secondly, she states that the first time she saw the old woman, "to be positive," was Sunday afternoon, 21st January. Thirdly, she states that the next time she saw the old woman was on 1st February, when she was arrested and put into the cart. Finally, she tells the Recorder that she was

more positive as to her identity when she saw her pass and repass than on the Sunday, when she stood amongst her family.

And the puzzle is: when did Mrs. Howard see old Mary pass and repass? I do not think there was any intention to tell lies: there was, more probably, a confusion of thought linked to a confusion of expression: but construed literally, Mrs. Howard's tale amounts to this: that she saw an old woman at a door on 21st January, that she saw an old woman being put into a cart on 1st February, that she thinks the old woman of the cart is the same as the old woman of the door; but isn't positive. The passing and repassing old woman remains a mystery. But the chief point to be noted is this: if Elizabeth Canning's story were true, then old Mary was at Mrs. Wells's on 1st January. Mrs. Howard was clearly a woman who kept an eye on the road before her house, like most country people; how was it that she did not see anything of the gipsies or hear of them till Friday, 19th January? Mrs. Wells's house was directly opposite to Mrs. Howard's house: is it likely that the gipsy party would remain within doors for eighteen days; that their presence—they were regarded as curiosities—should not form part of the gossip which Mrs. Howard's servants retailed to her?

Then follows the evidence of William Headland, a labouring man, who suffers from some confusion as to the months of the year and only knows of Christmas that it is in the winter. He is confused, too, about the various masters he

has served, and how long he has served them. He is not sure where he was living at Christmas 1752, but believes it was at Enfield Wash, because his father lives there. At all events, he remembers Wells being taken up, since he was at home then. And one day, he cannot tell which day: " I was going to the shop, and there were a parcel of people come about Wells's house: I went there and found a piece of lead, just at the corner of the window that joins to the house; it looked as if it came out of some window."

" How near to the house did you take it up ? "

" Within a yard or thereabouts, under the window that fronts the road: I doubled it up as soon as I found it, because I thought I would carry it home."

" What made you take such notice of it ? "

" Because it was bloody; and I heard Bet Canning had torn her ear." . . .

" Was it bloody when you picked it up ? "

" It was all bloody; I believe it was blood."

And Elizabeth Headland, William's mother, swore that her son did bring home the bit of lead, that there was blood upon it, that the date of the lead being brought home was "a small time after the people were taken up," that she had kept the piece of lead in a drawer till " last Friday was a week," and then it was not to be found.

But before William Headland was done with, Mr. Recorder asked him two pertinent questions.

" When did you hear Elizabeth had torn her ear ? "

"I do not know."

"What day did you pick up this lead?"

"I cannot tell."

Then, the matter of the lead finished. Headland is asked as to the presence of Mary Squires in Enfield Wash. He saw the old gipsy, he said, on 9th January. He looked at the old woman in Court and said he knew her from a thousand. It will have been noted that William was confused about dates, and weeks, and times, and seasons. He was asked how he knew that he had seen Mary Squires on 9th January. His reply was: "Because it was on a Tuesday, Waltham Market Day."

"Where did you see her?"

"I saw her under Mr. Loomworth Dane's back wall, telling a young man his fortune."

"Where does Mr. Dane live?"

"At the sign of the 'Bell,' at Enfield Highway. A young man came from a coachman; he was in a silver-laced hat; I stood looking at her; she said 'Go along, boy, lest your master should want you.' I stood leaning against a tree, and then went on a little farther; and could not hear what they said."

"How could you tell she was telling his fortune?"

"Because I saw her lay hold of his hand."

"Are you sure it was so early in January as the 9th?"

"I am."

"Did you see her any day after?"

"Yes, I saw her on the 12th, in Mrs. Wells's house: I went there to carry two pails of water;

there were the gipsy's two daughters; one of them had a pair of pumps on and was buckling them up."

"Look about the Court, and see if you see her."

"That is the girl (pointing to Mary Squires); I am sure it is one. If you were in your brown camlet gown I should know you better; I then could swear to it." . . .

"How do you know it to be the 12th?"

"Because it is Epping market day."

"What day of the week is that on?"

"It is on a Friday."

"Did you see her any time after this?"

"Yes; I was in Mr. Sam Johnson's walk, and saw her coming down a field. I spoke to her, and said, 'You are ganging home, it is very cold.' She said, 'so it is.'"

The cross-examination of William Headland and certain questions put by one of the judges implied that a man who did not know one month from another, who did not know whether Christmas came before January or after it, who could not give any distinct account of the masters he had served, or of how long he had served them, could not possibly be trusted to fix any dates whatever. There is, of course, a good deal to be urged in favour of this position: yet, I can well imagine that a certain sort of lout would be clearer about Epping market day than about Christmas. Yet, on the other hand, it may be urged that Christmas would bring William better meat, better drink than ordinary; and that such matters would mark the date very

strongly in the Headland mind: the point is doubtful.

Samuel Story, a skilled mechanic, who had retired, and was living at Waltham Abbey " on his fortune," was much clearer and more precise. Samuel had lived in Turkey Street, Enfield Wash, and had moved to Waltham Abbey at Michaelmas, 1752. He had seen the gipsy party, on and off, for about three years before 1753.

" They used to have two asses and a little horse. I have seen the horse grazing in White Webbs Lane, as I have rode through there; and the two asses, I have met with them on the road, and the two young women and a man; but their dress is so altered now, that I could not know them. They used to have a perfect gipsy's dress, with blankets over their shoulders, and handkerchiefs over their heads (you might see their black locks through them), following the two asses."

The gipsies, then, were familiar figures to Samuel Story, and he said, without doubt or reservation, that he had seen the old woman, on 23rd December 1752.

" Where did you see her ? "

" She was standing within the door of Mrs. Wells's house."

" What reason have you to think it was on that day ? "

" It was the Saturday before Christmas Day, a very fine, frosty morning; which induced me to take a walk to see Mr. Howard, who lives directly over against Mrs. Wells's. . . . When

I came over against Mrs. Wells's house, I saw the gipsy at the door. Curiosity led me a little out of the path, to see if it was the same gipsy I had seen in the house in White Webbs Lane."

. . . .

"Were you so near to her as to form any judgment whether it was the same person?"

"I was; I was certain it was the same person."

Recorder: "Upon the oath you have taken, is this (indicating Mary Squires) the same person?"

"Upon my oath it is." . . .

"Have you any other reason, so as to be certain it was the 23rd of December you saw her?"

"I have. I observed it was a hard frost in the morning; and the weather altered about noon to sleet and rain, by which it was very wet, and the wind and weather drove on my right side, as I was going home; and I, being subject to rheumatism, was taken with it; and the St. Anthony's fire seized me about the Monday or Tuesday following. . . . So I am very positive as to the day, for I never went out after that Saturday, when I came home, for near two months after."

This is plain, definite, and formidable. It cannot be said that cross-examination did much to shake Samuel Story. There is one singular point. Story had seen the old gipsy, he said, several times "at a house in White Webbs Lane, that is since pulled down." Mr. Willes, cross-examining, asks him:

"Were you ever in the same room with her?"

"No."

Presumably "at a house" must be taken to mean, "standing in front of a house," or "standing near a house," etc.

William Smith, an Enfield farmer, is the next witness.

"Look if you see Mary Squires in Court."

"Yes, sir, I see her."

"Did you ever see her before?"

"Yes, I have."

"Tell us where you remember to have seen her about a year and a half ago."

"I saw her in my cowhouse on the 15th of December 1752." . . .

"Have you seen her before that time?"

"I have."

"How came she in your cowhouse?"

"They came to ask for lodgings; I was not at home."

"Who do you mean by they?"

"The company that was with her."

The witness is somewhat muddle-headed. He wishes to say that old Mary Squires and her "company" came to ask for lodging in barn or cowhouse on 14th December 1752; that he was out; that the gipsies saw his housekeeper; that on the next day he walked into his cowhouse, and saw old Mary Squires there, with two men and two women with her, whom she called her sons and daughters. "They had lodged in our cowhouse and barn before that."

"Are you sure of that?"

"They have asked me before this; and used

commonly to come once a year for a pretty many years together."

So we may fairly equate the evidence of William Smith with a good deal of the Dorset evidence. Many of the men of Dorset swore that they had known old Mary for many years, and were certain that she was in their country from 1st January 1753 to 9th January, and after. Here is Mr. Smith who says he has known the gipsy party for pretty many years, and is certain that they were all in his cowshed on 15th December 1752. But this is queer. Though he had known them all so long, though he was quite certain about the old woman, though he saw them all in his cowhouse on 15th December: when Mr. Willes asks him:

"Then you cannot say you know the faces of the two men and two young women?"—his reply is:

"No, I do not."

Still he had his circumstances to fix the dates well in order. He had been making cider on 14th December at Dr. Crow's press.

"Did you make any minute of the day?"

"I know it was that day; I did make a minute; I sold some corn that week, and delivered it the same week, and I set it down in my book."

"Don't you sell corn almost every week?"

"I do." . . .

"Where is that book?"

"It is at home."

"Why is it not here?"

"I did not know I should have occasion for that here."

Loomworth Dane, keeper of the " Bell " at Enfield Highway, remembered seeing Mary Squires on old Christmas Day (the 4th or 5th of January) 1753. Mr. Dane kept a saddler's shop as well as the " Bell," and fitted farmer Norton's horse with a collar on that very day. He was also filling a barrow of gravel to lay down in his yard on that day, and while he rested a moment, the gipsy came by; " and I looked very wishfully at her."

" As she went by me, the wind blowed up her gown, and there was a great hole in the heel of her stocking." . . .

" Did you see her when she was in confinement ? "

" I did, when she was taken up, and saw her go into the cart."

" From what you observed on her going by, do you believe it was the same person ? "

" Yes, sir, I am sure of it."

" Are you sure now this is the same person ? "

" Yes, sir, I am. I saw her in Newgate and was sure of it then."

Dane's evidence appears perfectly straightforward and honest. The circumstances by which he fixes his date are as convincing as the circumstances by which the Dorset witnesses fixed their dates. And Mr. Willes's cross-examination does not shake him.

Now comes Samuel Arnot, a labourer, and neighbour to farmer Smith, living at White Webbs on Enfield Chase. Farmer Smith was the man who had housed the gipsies in his cow-house, as he declared, on 14th December 1752.

Samuel Arnot begins by identifying Mary Squires.

"Do you know such a person as Mary Squires?"

"Yes, sir."

"Look and see if you see her."

"That is the woman" (pointing to her).

"How long have you known her?"

"The first of my seeing her was on a Friday morning: she asked me if I saw a little brown horse? This was, as near as I can guess, about nine or ten days before new Christmas Day"—that is, 16th or 17th December 1752.

"How came you to fix upon that time?"

"I had been at a place called Clay Hill, and met her in the bushes: she asked me if I saw this horse, and said his legs were tied, and he had a clog upon him: then I turned back again, and asked what sort of a clog? She said her name was Squires.

. . . "Upon your oath, are you sure this is the woman?"

"Upon my oath, I am, sir."

"Did you ever see her any time but that?"

"I never saw her after that time till I saw her in Newgate; but do not know the particular day I saw her there." . . .

"Were you certain then it was the same person?"

"I was, sir; to the best of my knowledge, I believe now it is the same."

Strong evidence: but the cross-examination brings out some singular things. Mr. Willes asked Samuel Arnot whether there was anybody

with Mary Squires when he met her the second time, that is on the Sunday following the day of the first meeting.

" There were a man, two women, and two children with her."

Mr. Justice Clive: " Who carried the children ? "

" They walked on foot."

Mr. Willes: " How old might they be ? "

" Four or five, or six or seven years old." . . .

" Do you know farmer Smith ? "

" I do; his house stands about two or three pole from mine "—that is about sixteen yards.

" Did these two children seem to be gipsy children ? "

" I did not observe their colour; they seemed to belong to that gang."

" Do you know of their lying in farmer Smith's cowhouse ? "

" I do; they did, to the best of my knowledge."

" If these people had lain there, do you think he would not have remembered there being two children with them ? "

" His remembrance is nothing to me." . . .

Recorder: " What particular reason have you to imagine that these two children were with them (the gipsies) at farmer Smith's ? "

" I don't know that; I heard a noise of the voices of small people; I cannot say they were children, young or old."

Recorder: " Could you distinguish the voice of children ? "

" I could, to be sure, but I did not see the old woman."

Now there are several points of interest here. To go back a little: the Dorset witnesses describe the gipsy party as consisting of Mary Squires, her daughter Lucy, and her son George. According to the gipsies' story, they were joined by the other daughter, Mary, in the purlieus of London, and so proceeded to Enfield Wash. And on the day of the Raid, it was precisely these four people who were arrested at Mrs. Wells's house.

Then; Mr. Smith says that the old gipsy lost a little black horse, when she was staying in his cowhouse. Mr. Arnot says it was a little brown horse.

But if Mary Squires was in the habit of travelling with a horse, black or brown; why did not the Dorset witnesses mention the animal ? Let us suppose them for the moment to be liars, as to dates at all events: then they would certainly have brought in the horse to give verisimilitude to their perjuries.

Again, as to the composition of the gipsy party. Old Mary, daughter Mary, daughter Lucy, and son George were arrested at Mrs. Wells's. Farmer Smith describes the party that lodged in his cowhouse as consisting of old Mary, two men and two women: " she called them her sons and daughters." But Mr. Smith was quite unable to identify George, Lucy, or Mary, who were present in Court, as being of the party.

Mr. Arnot's gang is quite differently composed. He made the meinie of Mary Squires to consist of a man, two women, and two young

children; and he heard the children talking in the cowhouse; though his evidence here is a maze of either shuffle or muddle. He heard the voices of " small people," but he cannot say that they were the voices of children; and again—in the space of a minute or so—" he could [distinguish the voices of children] to be sure." Yet Mr. Smith, the farmer, who lodged the party in his cowhouse and went and looked at them, evidently saw no children. And I should have said that Mr. Arnot, like Mr. Smith, was unable to identify George, Mary, or Lucy as being of the party he had met.

And our conclusion from these premises ? It is difficult: but I am inclined to believe that there had been a gang of gipsies about Enfield Chase in December 1752; and that Smith and Arnot lied deliberately as to the old woman. We have seen that Canning's friends did not hesitate to intimidate witnesses at the very door of the Old Bailey; there is no wild improbability in supposing them capable of suborning evidence on their own side. Yet; if these witnesses lied; why did they not complete their lie by identifying George, Lucy and young Mary ?

Elizabeth Arnot, wife of Samuel, was sworn and identified Mary Squires at once and without hesitation or doubt. She had seen her about a week before New Christmas: she saw her in farmer Smith's cowhouse; and outside it, when the gipsy asked Mrs. Arnot about the missing horse. Mrs. Arnot, more vague, or more cautious than her husband or Mr. Smith, " saw several more " with old Mary, but did not take

notice of them; saw the gipsy's son whistling for the horse, but "took so little account of him, I can't say whether I should know him or not."

Sarah Star lived close to Mrs. Wells's, her husband rented a farm. The old gipsy, she said, came to her house on the 18th or 19th of January 1753.

"At first she came and asked at the door, if I had any delft to mend or china? My man and boy were at dinner: I bid them give her an answer, because I was busy. Then she came into the kitchen to me, and asked to buy some pork of me and brown bread: I said I had but that piece of bread in the house, and more need to buy than to sell. Then she asked me to sell her some chitterlings, I having some, and black puddings, lying on the table: I gave her a good piece of chitterling to get rid of her. . . . I wanted to get rid of her for I was terribly scared, seeing such a strange gipsy woman; though I have seen hundreds of gipsies at one time or another."

Mrs. Star fixed her recollection of the date by her husband having gone for a load of pease "and the note was dated the 18th or 19th of January." She said she had delivered this note to Canning's attorney. But Mr. Nares (for Canning) said that they had not got the paper to produce. Probably Mrs. Star's evidence was true as to the visit of the gipsy; and the mistake as to the date may have been innocent.

Daniel Vass, a labouring man, an inhabitant of Turkey Street, Enfield Wash, recognized old Mary Squires as she sat in Court. He had seen

her, he said, going along the Causeway behind his house on old Christmas Day; 5th January, new style. The gipsy was four or five yards away: "She had," said Daniel Vass, "a brick-coloured gown on, an old red cloak, and a whitish-coloured one over that, and an old black beaver hat; it was not a black hat as women commonly wear."

"What reason have you to fix upon old Christmas Day?"

"By reason I went to work with a master I have worked for almost eleven years, and he did not choose I should work on that day."

"Why did he not choose you should work?"

"By reason he thought it was Christmas Day, and ought to be kept."

This witness was quite firm in his identification: "I knew the woman when I saw her (at Newgate) and should from a thousand: a man if he has but half an eye, might know that woman if he sees her again."

Jane Dadwell, shopkeeper of Turkey Street, Enfield Wash, gives evidence as to Mary Squires—whom she identifies—as having been in her shop on several occasions, but particularly on the Thursday in the "new" Christmas week. "She came for coffee, tea, and butter"; testifies Jane Dadwell; and one wonders again how these poor people could afford to buy tea, an expensive luxury in the mid-eighteenth century and for long afterwards. It will be remembered that Mr. Fagin brought Mr. Sikes, amongst other rarities, half-a-pound of seven-and-six-penny green.

Tobias Kellog, husbandman of Enfield, says he saw Mary Squires (identified by him) for the first time in January: "something better than three weeks in January was twelvemonth." This obscure date he explains, after some questioning, to be "three weeks in January, and better"; finally it turns out that he meant almost a month before the Raid of 1st February. In his evidence he said that the old woman came to his barn-door and asked for "a bit of tobacco," and Tobias answered that he "used none." It is only America that "uses" tobacco now; here is another instance of old English becoming modern Americanism.

John Frame had been footman and gardener to "'squire' Parsons," formerly of Turkey Street, Enfield Wash, but, at the time of the trial, of James's Street, Grosvenor Square. John Frame identifies the gipsy. He said the gipsy told him his fortune—as much as could be decently expected for three halfpence—through the palisadoes—the palings, I suppose, of his master's garden. He identifies Mary Squires, and says that the fortune-telling took place on 11th January, but his method of fixing the date is not very convincing. Joseph Gould, a labouring man of Turkey Street, gives evidence to like effect, is firm in his identification: "I thought I never saw such a woman in my life before for features." Mary Gould, wife of Joseph, told how on the 11th or 12th of January—these dates fixed by the departure of "'squire' Parsons" and "Madam" to town—the gipsy-woman (identified) called on her.

" My door was bolted: she called at it, and I opened it: she asked me if I had any china to mend ? I said, no. She said directly, ' you will not live long.' I said, ' Mistress, I shall not give anything for I don't want to hear my fortune told.' I shut the door, and watched her out at the window, and saw her go into Mr. Harrington's yard and out again. I was a little surprised at her, because I thought she was a very ordinary woman."

This last sentence is obscure to me. What was Mrs. Gould surprised at ? And we have understood from all sides that old Mary Squires was a very extraordinary woman.

Then succeeds Humphrey Holding, a gardener of Turkey Street, Enfield Wash, who also marks his dates by the comings and goings of Squire Parsons and Madam Parsons. He was nailing up vines on 11th January 1753, for Dr. Harrington, and Mary Squires asked at Dr. Harrington's door whether there was any china to mend. There was another circumstance by which Humphrey Holding knew the date: Dr. Harrington had not paid him for his day's work, and, consequently, his wife had entered the matter in a book. But he had not had the presence of mind, as he said, to bring this book with him. And it also appeared that when he had been examined before on the affair, at the Mansion House, he had not been able to fix the date: he " could not resolve himself of the time."

The evidence for the presence of Mary Squires at Enfield in the first weeks of January goes on monotonously enough. Sarah Vass, wife of Daniel Vass, also adjusts her times and

seasons by the movements of the mighty house of Parsons and identifies the gipsy, mentioning certain dishes of tea and a pipe of tobacco given to the old woman. It may be noted, by the way, that this group of witnesses all speak of the gipsy as being alone. They know nothing of George, Lucy or Mary, nothing of another man, nothing of the two young children. But Anne Johnson fixes her date by a method of her own. She spun wool for Mr. Smitheram, and she knew that Mary Squires had come to her door on 18th January, because of her having carried her work to Mr. Smitheram two days before, on the 16th, and it was set down, as usual, in Mr. Smitheram's book. But, a little later, Mr. Smitheram and his daughter (and book-keeper) exhibit their book of account and show that Anne Johnson's work was received on 23rd January: the day before the gipsy party arrived at Enfield Wash—according to their story. And, likely enough, this fact may go some way in solving the puzzle of the Enfield witnesses. They had really seen old Mary Squires about the Wash, but, partly from the ordinary difficulty that many of us have in fixing exact dates, partly, it may be, influenced by agreeable arguments, agreeably backed by the friends of Elizabeth, they had mistaken the dates in January which were of such vital importance.

Grace Kirby had lived at Enfield since " some time after Christmas " 1752. She identifies Mary Squires, and says that she came to her house inquiring about potatoes about a fortnight before the Raid of 1st February 1753.

Wise Basset (wife of John Basset) recognizes Mary Squires present in Court. The gipsy came to her house, says Wise, on the 21st or 22nd of January 1753, asked for a light for a pipe, and was given a breakfast. Mrs. Basset has a complicated set of data by which she fixes the day of the gipsy's call. She recollects the date, she says:

"Because I killed a hog on the Thursday before New Christmas, and that day a young woman that lived with me went to service; that day month I saw the gipsy . . . she came and opened the door, then came in and asked me to let her light her pipe; I gave her a penny for telling me my fortune." . . .

The Recorder: "Are you a married woman?"

"I am; it was a little foolishness that belongs to womankind."

James Pratt, one of Mr. Smith's labourers, identifies Mary Squires, and remembers her coming to him in the cowhouse and asking for leave to lie there; he cannot recollect the day of the month exactly. But three days before New Christmas he moved from Enfield to Cheshunt; and the gipsy came to the cowhouse before that; before 22nd December 1752. Mr. Pratt's description of the party differs from his master. Mr. Smith mentioned the old gipsy, two women and two men; Mr. Pratt saw one man and two women with the gipsy. The Recorder asks whether there were any children: Mr. Pratt replies that he can't tell. Both differ, it will be noted, from Mr. Arnot, who lived close to the cowhouse, heard the talk of the children, and saw Mary Squires accompanied by a man, two

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MARY SQUIRES AND THE INSPECTOR

women and two children. And Pratt "can't tell" whether there were any children. Yet he worked in the farmer's yard, was in the cow-house when the gipsy first appeared, presumably entered it several times, during the three days of the gipsy's stay there. And yet he does not know whether there were any children in the party or not.

But it seemed that Pratt was one of the people to whom Mary Squires spoke about her missing horse.

"On the same day she told me it was her belief I was the man that had the horse."

"Why did she say so?"

"Because I worked in the yard, and the horse was missing, and I happened to speak a word to the man that was with her: I asked him what he would give me to help him to his horse again: so he went and told her directly."

"Do you think you should know that man?"

"I can't be positive."

"Look about, and see if you see anybody like him."

—He looks round; and as his eye passed over George Squires, backwards and forwards, George held down his head—

A juryman: "I see George hold his head down, as the witness looks towards him."

Mr. Davy: "George, when witnesses are ordered to look for you, hold up your head; I myself saw you this time; it does not look well."

But Pratt cannot identify him. He says: "It is hard saying, I will not swear in that."

It is remarkable; but not one of what may be

called the Smith-cowhouse group of witnesses, succeeds in identifying anyone of the gipsy party save the old woman. Each one of these witnesses agrees that she is accompanied by a party—they vary, as we have seen, as to the composition of the party—but none, pretends to recognize George, Lucy, or Mary the younger. Yet these three were the undoubted companions of the old gipsy while she was at Enfield Wash.

Then an odd passage:

"Had you any other talk with her?"

"Yes, sir. After she told me about having the horse, she said she had got a very good friend not far off, and she would go to him, and if she wanted a guinea or two, she could have it; and she would go to the cunning man, and would have the horse, if he was above ground."

"How came she to talk of going to a cunning man, when she would be looked upon to be a cunning woman herself?"

"I don't know that."

Cross-examined, the witness is not to be shaken in his identification of Mary Squires. "Upon my oath," he swears, "this is the woman, I am positive in my conscience, and I am sure that was no other woman; this is the woman I saw at that blessed time."

"Did you ever see a woman like her in your life?"

"No, never in my days."

And he is also certain that the woman told him her name was Mary Squires.

Mrs. Howard's servant, Lydia Farroway, is

the next witness. Mrs. Howard, it will be remembered, had given a confused, but apparently honest account of having seen the old gipsy at Enfield Wash. The Howard's house faced Mrs. Wells's establishment. Lydia Farroway swore that she had seen the gipsy " on Tuesday was se'nnight before she was taken up "; this is on 23rd January; the day before the Squires party came to Mrs. Wells's, according to their story. The servant girl remembered the date because on that day she had made some mince-pies " against my young master's birthday," which was the 29th of January; and " we made them before the time, that they might be cold, to be heated again." Mr. Willes, cross-examining, suggested that six days was a long time to keep mince-pies before consumption, and I agree with him. But Lydia seemed to think that mince-pies improved in larder; and it is quite possible that this mistaken notion was held. But the girl complicates her evidence by saying that she is quite sure that she saw Mary Squires once or twice before January 23rd; but cannot give even approximate dates.

Margaret Richardson, of Enfield, recognizes Mary Squires. She had seen her in Mrs. Waterhouse's shop in Turkey Street; the gipsy was smoking a pipe.

" I sat down there, I believe, a quarter of an hour; and I took particular notice of her, because I never saw the like before, and I was surprised."

The date was " in the New Christmas week, as near as I can guess "—between 25th Decem-

ber to 31st December. And Mrs. Richardson saw the old woman pass her door later, on Old Christmas Day. I do not know whether her total ignorance as to the month in which Christmas falls should be held to invalidate her evidence.

George Clements, a servant at Mr. Hamilton's, whose house was about a hundred yards from Mrs. Wells's, identifies the gipsy, and remembers her coming to his master's place, and offering to tell Mrs. Hamilton's fortune: this was about a fortnight before 1st February; the 18th or 19th of January. This man said he saw her again as she was going up into the walk to Turkey Street; this was two or three days afterwards.

"Did you see her afterwards?"

"No; only when I saw her in Newgate, and then she knowed me."

"How do you know that?"

"I asked her whether she knew me. She said, she did."

"Did you ask her that of your own accord?"

"I did; and she said to me, 'I asked your mistress to let me have a pound of pickled pork, and what harm did I do to you if I was there?'"

The cross-examination of this witness establishes an interesting point. It does credit to Mr. Willes's ingenuity.

"Do you ever slide on the ice?"

"No, I never could slide in my life."

"Have you seen boys slide on the ice?"

"I have."

"Do you remember a pond near Mrs. Wells's house?"

"Yes, I used to water my horses there."

"Morning and night?"

"Yes."

"Do you know the window that they suppose Canning made her escape from?"

"I do."

"Could you, by looking out of that window, see that pond?"

"I could, very plainly."

"How many yards might it be from the window?"

"It may be about eight yards."

"Do you recollect whether there was frosty weather that January?"

"Yes, there was."

"Was that pond froze over then?"

"It was; we were forced to break the ice for the horses to drink."

"Have you ever seen the boys slide on the ice on that pond?"

"I have."

"How many have you seen there sliding together?"

"Two or three at a time."

A very pretty piece of technique in cross-examination. It must have seemed, I suppose, quite pointless to the witness. But note the inevitable inferences. This pond was twenty-four feet, about the length of a very modest room, from the place where the hapless Elizabeth was supposed to have been confined. Here the farm horses were watered twice a day; and nothing can be done with horses without much noise, and roarings and inarticulate cries. And the pond

was frozen, and the boys slid on it, and village boys do not slide—or do anything else, for that matter—without noise and shouting and loud cries. Then why did not Elizabeth, hearing, day after day, all this friendly sound of man and boy within a few feet of her, shriek and yell after the manner of her sex, and bring down an indignant mob upon the wicked house of Wells? She was frozen into a dumb terror? It is barely possible; but no more than barely possible.

Then Hannah Fensham identifies Mary Squires, and says she met her on 16th January, and remembers the date by the heavy fall of snow on the night of the 15th, and verified the date, as she affirmed, in the almanack. But she was given an almanack, and asked a few simple questions, but breaks down utterly, and can tell nothing whatever by the almanack, mixing up Sunday with Tuesday, in an altogether hopeless manner.

Mrs. Sherrard, of Ponders End, about a mile and a half from Enfield, had curious difficulty in identifying the gipsy. "Look about, and see if you see her here," says Counsel; and the report goes on:

"She could not see her; she went down and looked about, and up again twice; the last time she pointed to her:

"'Why this is the woman.'"

Mr. Davy's cross-examination was severe.

"You went down twice to look at the old woman; did you see her face the first time?"

"Yes, I did, but did not mind her till afterwards."

" I hope you mind what you say; you know the consequence of perjury; you are before God and a court of justice; therefore attend to me: Did you see that old woman upon your going down the first time from off the place you now stand ? "

" I did not know her because she is clean; she is not so nasty and dirty as she was before."

" Then the second time you did recollect her: you say she is the same woman ? "

" Yes, I do."

" Did you see her face the first time going down ? "

" No, I did not see her face, because I did not take so much notice."

" Did not you see her face, or did not you know her face ? "

" I did see her face; but being clean she is quite altered."

" The man that swore you said, you were to swear to the whole truth, and nothing but the truth: you have one foot in the grave, and the other out, be careful what you say: Was she cleaner the first time than she was the second ? "

" She is all the same, but I did not take so much notice; and, being cleaner, she is altered."

" Do you swear to her by her complexion, or features ? "

" By her complexion and features both."

" Did you ever see such a woman in your life ? "

" No, I never did."

" What day of the month is New Christmas Day ? "

" I cannot tell indeed, because I can neither write nor read."

" What month is it in ? "

" I cannot tell."

" Was it in June, or July ? "

" I cannot tell."

Here is a point for learned students of social life in the eighteenth century to decide: were working people, illiterates, so grossly ignorant in general as not to know the names of the months, not to know even in what month the great eating and drinking festival of Christmas fell ? If so; it is curious enough; and unfortunate for my own theory, which is that country folk, simple folk of all sorts, knew a great deal more when they knew by tradition, and not from newspapers. But, waiving this point: I must say that I think Elizabeth Sherrard was shaken on the point of identification. As she said, she had never seen such a woman as old Mary in her life before: would a little dirt make so much difference as to render that odd nose, that grotesque mouth, those frightful scars of scrofula unrecognizable ? As to Elizabeth Sherrard's evidence in chief: she said she saw the gipsy, Mary Squires, three days running, Thursday, Friday and Saturday before New Christmas.

" Where did you see her ? "

" In Mother Wells's house. I went there, and went into her parlour, and when I came out again, I saw the gipsy stand at the kitchen door. I turned back again, and asked Mrs. Wells who she had got in her house ? She said, ' Lodgers.'

On the Friday, I went into the Marsh Lane, and saw her standing at the window; and on Saturday I went down to Cheshunt, and she was standing then at the door."

There is some little oddity about the circumstances that led to the witness seeing Mary Squires for the first time. Mrs. Wells, she said, asked her to come in: "she wanted to see me because I had not been well."

"Had you any acquaintance with her?"

"No; nor never went near her house."

And in cross-examination:

"Mrs. Wells bid me come, and said she would give me something for a Christmas box."

. . . . .

"What did she give you for a Christmas box?"

"She did not give me no great matter."

"There is no harm in saying what it was."

"It was a small matter; I had but a penny" —I suppose about sixpence of our money, or perhaps more.

XI

Elizabeth Sherrard was the last of the Enfield witnesses called for the defence. Putting it briefly, the business of these witnesses was to prove that old Mary Squires was at Enfield Wash on 2nd January 1753. This being established; it would follow that the Dorsetshire witnesses were mistaken or perjured, and, by consequence, that Elizabeth Canning's tale was unshaken by any utterance of theirs. And, weighing up the Enfield evidence, there is some difficulty in reaching a just conclusion. On the face of it, we have no right to say that all these people—there were twenty-seven of them—were hired perjurers. I think that the " Friends of Elizabeth " were capable of anything, and I believe that some of the witnesses were bought; but there are others, who, to all appearance gave their evidence honestly, and in a straightforward manner. Such, I think, were the two Howards, such was Loomworth Dane who kept the " Bell." What are we to say of them ? I think myself that they were honestly mistaken, not as to the old woman, but as to the date of their seeing her. It is a convention amongst lawyers that if A has met B on 5th January 1924, he should be able to recall the exact date in June 1925. But as a matter of fact, very few of us have memories that are at all made like that. Some of us never succeed in being quite sure as

to the date of Edward the Fourth's accession to the throne of this realm, though we had to learn it when our memories were at their best, though we were badgered and bothered and punished and examined on it. And even when a witness has some circumstance in his head by which to fix his date; he may, for all that, be mistaken; though the fixing event, as we may call it, actually took place—but on another day. Thus, Loomworth Dane of the " Bell " was quite sure that he had seen Mary Squires on Old Christmas Day (5th January 1753). He knew this because he measured farmer Norton's horse for a collar on that day, and also because he laid down gravel on that day, and because he gave his man a holiday on that day. And, no doubt, he did see the gipsy woman, and did measure the horse for a collar, and did give his man a holiday, and did put down gravel in his yard. But he was mistaken in thinking that he saw the gipsy on the day of his performing the various operations noted by him. For Anne Johnson spun wool for Mr. Smitheram; she carried a parcel to him, as she said, on 16th January, and she saw the gipsy at her door two days later, on 18th January. But Mr. Smitheram and his daughter, Mrs. Hudgel, produced the book in which they entered wool sent out and wool returned; the work that Anne Johnson delivered, she was quite sure, on the 16th of January, was actually delivered on the 23rd, by the evidence of the entry. Now the 23rd was the day before the arrival of the gipsy party at Enfield Wash (according to their story). No doubt old Mary Squires came to Anne

Johnson's door two days after the delivery of the wool; on 25th January. And yet Anne was fixed and positive: she was quite certain—of the wrong date.

I cannot make up my mind as to the evidence of the cowhouse group of witnesses. They may have been honest muddleheads: they may have been dishonest liars. There is one circumstance which speaks in favour of the milder hypothesis: this is, that not one of them identified George, Lucy, or young Mary Squires. They must have known, one would think, from the former proceedings and from the common gossip of Enfield Wash, that old Mary, her son, and her two daughters were the party taken at Mrs. Wells's house, on 1st February: and if we are to suppose these witnesses to be perjurers, we must also suppose that they would strengthen their lie as to the gipsy by identifying her family also. This they did not do. They did not agree in the least as to the number or kind of company that was with the old gipsy; and, of course, this fact weakens their evidence. But most of them agree that the old woman was inquiring for a missing pony; and—this is remarkable—all of them agree that after 21st December 1752, they saw no more of the gipsy till they saw her in Newgate after her arrest.

The case of this evidence is excessively difficult. It would be entirely simple, if Mary Squires had been an ordinary gipsy woman. Then, as I have suggested before, one would say that there were two gangs of gipsies in the Enfield neighbourhood, with an old woman in

each: the first gang appearing about 14th December 1752, and going away, to parts unknown in a week's time; the second gang, consisting of Mary Squires, her son and two daughters, arriving on 24th January 1753 and discovered at Susannah Wells's on 1st February. We should reflect that one old gipsy woman is like enough to another, and that the cowhouse group had quite innocently confused the two. But this won't do. It was agreed by all, Mary Squires included, that she was unique; a monster of ugliness, a very nightmare of an old woman; God had never made a face like hers, as old Mary herself averred. And yet the cowhouse people are quite certain that it was Mary Squires who was about their country in the week, 14th-21st December 1752. For a moment, it struck me as barely possible that old Mary Squires was in the Enfield district in the December of 1752 (though not with her family), had gone down to Dorsetshire on 20th or 21st December, and had returned to the neighbourhood, accompanied by her family, on 24th January 1753. But she is picked up at South Parrot, Dorsetshire on 29th December. And South Parrot is about 160 miles from London: the gipsy rate of progression was about ten miles a day: the hypothesis is impossible, and for people of their condition the coach is not to be thought of.

There is yet another possibility, though it is a wild one. Could Mary Squires have gone down to Dorsetshire by wagon? I suppose the stage wagon travelled at the rate of twenty-five miles

or so in the twenty-four hours. Let us put it that old Mary set out from London on 22nd December 1752. On the 28th she should have arrived at the Dorsetshire sea-coast: it was on the 29th that she is "discovered" at South Parrot. It is clearly possible, therefore, that she made the journey in the given time.

But if she made it; why did she make it? There we get into very deep waters, and wholly conjectural ones. But in the first place, we must consider that the gipsies were never *boni et legales homines;* they were essentially a lawless tribe, who lived as they could on the community. We have every reason to believe that Mary Squires did not cut off the stays of Elizabeth Canning on the morning of 2nd January 1753; we have no reason at all for believing that the old gipsy or her relations were decent, law-abiding people. Their acknowledged occupation, in fact, was the peddling of smuggled goods; and we may take it generally that they got their living however they could and wherever they could; and usually or always by means banned utterly by the law. Possibly, old Mary got news that a promising cargo was to be run into a Dorset cove, on a dark night at the year's ending, possibly, it was important that she should be there to make her bargain with the smugglers and the small local drapers. There seems to me no striking improbability in the supposition; one cannot venture to say more than that.

And, referring back to George Squires's evidence; it will be seen that his account of the

movements of the gipsy party before 29th December is by no means clear or satisfactory. He is asked by Mr. Davy, examining in chief, where he was on the Christmas before his mother was arrested, that is, the Christmas of 1752. His reply is: "Really, I cannot tell you." He recollects perfectly the date of the party's arrival at South Parrot, on 29th December—four days later—but he doesn't know where he slept the night before. And when he is asked to give an account of the family travels in the autumn of 1752, he is nebulous and uncertain. He lived, he said, at Newington Butts in Southwark; and started out "about seven or eight weeks before Michaelmas"—let us say, about the middle of August. Then, there is a gap, extending from 15th August to 29th December. It is a large gap. Mr. Morton, cross-examining, tried to get George to fill it in; much to George's distress. Where did he go to, Newington Butts left behind? Answer: "Into the Weald of Kent." And there he met his mother and sister by chance. Is unable to name any town in Kent; went from Kent into Sussex; contradicts himself as to the towns he did or did not pass through; cannot remember any towns they passed through between Lewes and South Parrot; then remembers passing through Salisbury; drops in with difficulty the names of Hindon, Mear, Shaftesbury; but very uncertain and misty about these movements, unable to remember the signs of the alehouses, where they slept. It is, of course, quite possible that all this was the result of stupidity, as Mr. Davy observed; on the other

hand it may mask certain secret expeditions, careers, and movements, of the gipsies, which it was not desirable to discuss in the publicity of a law court.

But let it be remembered that all this is hypothesis, and nothing but hypothesis. It is put forward, very tentatively, to get over the difficulty of the cowhouse witnesses. If this group lied as to old Mary; why did they not lie as to young Mary, George, and Lucy? If they were honest; how came old Mary to be in the neighbourhood of Enfield Wash, 14th-21st December 1752; and to be in Dorsetshire a week later?

Analysing the evidence of the Enfield witnesses as to dates; it appears that the only people who saw Mary Squires in mid-December were what we have called the cowhouse group. There is a gap between 18th December and 22nd December; and from that onwards witnesses are produced who can fill in most of the days till 22nd January with a sight of the old woman. On 23rd December Samuel Story saw the gipsy "within Mrs. Wells's door": this is notable. For the Howards, estimable and, I think, thoroughly honest witnesses, lived opposite to Mrs. Wells. And Mr. Howard, though he noticed the regular Wells establishment going up and down and to and fro, seems quite doubtful as to whether he saw any gipsies at all. And Mrs. Howard says that the first time she saw Mary Squires to be certain was on January 21st, and the first time she heard of them was on 19th January. Then, Lydia Farroway, the Howard's

servant, saw old Mary Squires at the door of "Mr. Mackhouse, a Quaker," on 23rd January, but had seen her once or twice before; but could give no dates. Well: Enfield Wash was a small place, the Howards lived opposite to Mrs. Wells's house, and new appearances are subjects of remark in little towns. According to the theory of defence, Mary Squires had been at Susannah Wells's since 23rd December: how is it that she was not seen by Mrs. Howard or her maid till 21st January or thereabouts? Her habit was vagrant; she was seen—according to other witnesses—here, there, everywhere about Enfield Wash from 22nd December onward. If that were so: how is it that she escaped the observation of the Howard household for a whole month's time, as she passed and repassed under their noses?

My solution of this puzzle is that the Howard people unwittingly set back their date by a few days; putting 21 for 24 or 25. As to the other witnesses; some of them were muddlers, and some, I fear, deliberate perjurers.

The Enfield case ended; there is a brief legal discussion. An anonymous letter had been received by Elizabeth Canning's counsel, Mr. Morton. The letter said that there was a certain Mrs. Edwards, "who could give some light into this affair." Should Mrs. Edwards be subpœnaed? It was decided after an amicable conference that this should not be done. And then a little more technical matter as to the admissi-

bility of certain other evidence; and finally, John Ward is sworn.

John Ward said he had known Susannah Wells, for twenty years, as he believed. By this, it seemed, he meant he had first known her twenty years before, that the acquaintance had continued for eight years, and that then he had lost sight of her for twelve years.

" I went to see her in Bridewell. The first word she said to me was, ' Who thought of seeing you here ? ' My reply was, ' By seeing your name in the newspapers.' . . . I asked her how she came to keep the girl there a fortnight ? "

" What did you mean by ' there ' ? "

" I understood by the paper the girl was kept at her house."

" What was her answer ? "

" She said, she was there twenty-eight days. I asked her what room she kept her in. She said, ' You know the room very well.' "

Alderman Dickinson: " Had you been acquainted with her, and did you know the rooms in her house ? "

" I had been acquainted there twelve or thirteen years ago (but not since I have been in business for myself) and have been all over the house."

Counsel: " Did you understand what room she meant ? "

" No, sir."

In cross-examination, it appeared that Mr. Ward—he was a breeches-maker of Maid Lane, St. Mary Overy's parish—was with a friend of

his, a Mr. Jones, drinking a tankard of beer, "and he threw his skits, and said, Mother Wells had been an old procurer of mine." And Counsel suggested that when he asked Mrs. Wells how she came to keep the girl for a fortnight, and she answered, "she was there twenty-eight days," what Mrs. Wells really meant was: "A fortnight! The papers say I kept the girl twenty-eight days." But Mr. Ward would not accept this interpretation of the sentence. Mr. Jones, the friend who threw skits and had been with Mr. Ward on his visit to Susannah, confirmed Ward's story.

"He asked her, how she came to be so vile as to shut up the girl a fortnight. 'A fortnight,' said she, 'she was there eight-and-twenty days.'"

Thereupon Mr. Nares, for Elizabeth Canning, declares that he is going to impeach the credit of some of the witnesses for the Crown, and that he proposes to begin with Judith Natus. He calls Nathaniel Crumphorne, householder of Waltham Cross. Fortune and Judith had left Enfield Wash, and had come to live at Waltham Cross, and Mr. Crumphorne knew them both. About ten days before the trial, Crumphorne had seen Judith, and had said to her: "Mrs. Natus, how can you have the conscience, knowing this innocent creature Betty Canning was at Mrs. Wells's house, that you should go and be an evidence against her?" The answer she made was, "Indeed, Mr. Crumphorne, I cannot say but she really was there, when we lodged there." Cross-examined:

"There is the little word 'but,' are you sure

that was mentioned ? I will read it without that word—' Mr. Crumphorne, I cannot say she really was there, when we lodged there.' "

" She said the word ' but.' "

" Are you sure she said that word ? "

" She said it indeed."

Mrs. Crumphorne was called, and confirmed her husband; and yet, oddly, does not confirm him. Mr. Crumphorne's evidence depended, as we have seen on " the little word, ' but.' " But listen to Mrs. Crumphorne:

" My husband said to her, ' How could you be so cruel, knowing Elizabeth Canning was confined when you was there, to go to swear as you did ? ' Her answer was, ' Indeed, Mr. Crumphorne, really she was there, when we lodged there.' "

" Tell the words as near as you can."

" She said, ' Indeed, Mr. Crumphorne, she actually was there, when we lodged there.' "

" Did she say she was confined there ? "

" No, sir."

And it seems to me that the two Crumphorne's cancel each other out. According to Mr. Crumphorne, the ' but ' was the vital word in Judith's reply: according to Mrs. Crumphorne it was never uttered. And as to Judith's reply in Mrs. Crumphorne's version: it is the oddest excuse for committing perjury that has yet been recorded. One is inclined to believe that the Crumphornes were liars.

And now comes Paul Stevens, a publican of Clerkenwell, who went to have a talk with Mary Squires, when she was in gaol.

" She began to speak and resolve some questions. She acknowledged she was at Mrs. Wells's house, but said, ' For what I am here for, I am innocent of, that is, cutting off her stays; but to be sure, the person was there, I believe.' She said she never was guilty of robbing the girl."

" How long did she say she had been there herself ? "

" She said she had been there a fortnight and three days, I think."

That would make Mary Squires's visit to Mrs. Wells begin in 16th January 1753. But one of Elizabeth's witnesses saw her in Mrs. Wells's doorway on 23rd December 1752.

Paul Stevens cross-examined:

" Then she said she did not cut her stays off ? "

" She put her hands up and said, ' As God is my Saviour, what I am sent here for, I am innocent of '; but she said she believed the person was there."

" Did she say she saw the person there ? "

" No, she did not. She said she herself was there a fortnight and three days, and the girl was there in the time."

" Answer my question: Did she say she saw Elizabeth Canning at Wells's in her life ? "

" No, she did not."

" Did she make use of the word, ' believe ' ? "

" She said she was sure she was there."

" Did she acknowledge she was there ? "

" She did; she came into a free way of speaking at last, more than at first."

. . . Mr. Justice Clive: "Did she say she saw her there?"

"She said she was in the house sure enough; she believed she was, and positively, almost, sure of it."

Next; witnesses are called to destroy the character of Fortune Natus: and I confess, as I have noted, that this personage does not impress me very favourably. He takes his wife to live in a common brothel; and then declares that Mother Wells's was a quiet and well-conducted house, free from any sign of irregularity. Well; Joseph Haines, householder of Ware, says he has known Fortune Natus for six or seven years, and has a very bad opinion of him.

"Do you believe his oath is to be taken?"

"I believe it is not. I know it is not fit to be taken. He is a very dishonest man."

Mr. Davy, cross-examining, cannot do much with this witness.

"Do you think he would rather swear false than truth, though he did not get a shilling by it?"

"I think he would, he hates truth."

. . . "Do you know his wife? Is she a sad wretch too?"

"She is a sad body."

"A drunken beast?"

"You have guessed right as any man in England. You give a very good guess."

"What, have you not made it up with him?"

"He once brought me a forged note."

Thus Mr. Haines, barge-owner of Ware.

Paul Chapman, bricklayer of Ware, simply gives Fortune a very bad character, and believes " he is not to be believed on oath." So, Thomas Green, farmer of Ware, to much the same effect. And the Recorder asks Green why he is sure that Fortune Natus would do anything for hire. Answer:

" He has never injured me or robbed me; but he was a parishioner of Ware, and he eloped, and left a child to the workhouse."

Another technical interlude. Decided: that what Justice Tashmaker might say as to Virtue Hall's confession—before the first trial—was not evidence.

William Metcalf, glazier, painter, and plumber of Enfield Highway, is called as to the matter of the sign, which one, Ezra Whiffin, bought from Mother Wells, the said sign having been part of the lumber in the hay-loft. It will be remembered that from the first an intolerable cloud of confusion hung over this matter of the sign; a cloud which I am afraid I am quite unable to dissipate. There was the sign, of the Crown, which had been cut down in the time of the Rebellion. What Rebellion? The Great Rebellion of 1645, I suppose. Judith Natus remembered the sign of the Crown, " fronting you as you go up " (the stairs into the loft), and also the sign of the Fountain, standing beside the Crown; and of the sign of the Fountain we hear no more from anybody. And, says Judith, Mr. Whiffin bought this sign of the Crown before Old Christmas Day (January 5th) and then came and bought the irons some time

before the affair of 1st February; and then comes Mr. Metcalf who carried a sign home to Mr. Whiffin on a date which shows that Mr. Whiffin's story cannot be true, and has a book to prove this, but has unfortunately left the book at home. However, he has a pocketbook with him of an evidential character, but unfortunately the year, 1753, turns out to have been written a week before. And on the whole, the sign, and the sign irons, and the piece of wood in which the irons were fixed, and Old Style and New Style are thrown up and caught and juggled with in a manner which to the present deponent is totally incomprehensible; the said deponent, however, inclining to believe that William Metcalf is a liar. Turning back to Ezra Whiffin's evidence in chief; confusion is considerably worse confounded; since Ezra says, not that he bought the old sign of the Crown from the hay-loft; but that Metcalf painted him a sign, and that he merely got the irons from Mrs. Wells. But, soon afterwards, witnesses are called who declare that Mr. Whiffin is a very honest man; and then Thomas Bell, Fortune Natus's master, gives his servant an excellent character. He does not think that Fortune Natus would forswear himself, and:

"During the whole time [the thirteen months of the man's engagement] I do not know he has told me a lie. I have eight servants about my house, and I should be glad to find the fellow of him."

There is a renewal of the wrangle about the Basingstoke letter, written by Mrs. Morris, for

Lucy Squires, to her sweetheart, William Clarke, down in Abbotsbury. There is an intense complication here. Firstly, the final figure of the date, 1753, is missing: a suspicious circumstance. Then the post-mark is blurred and difficult to be sure about; but a post-office official is recalled as to the days of the week on which the Basingstoke letters come in, and almanacks are produced which show that "no 19th January, since January 1749, has happened upon a Monday, Wednesday, or Friday, except in 1753, when it happened on a Friday; and by the three figures, which remain in this letter, the year's date must be either 1750, 51, 52, 53, or 54." But the gipsies, by their own tale, Mrs. Morris corroborating, were at Basingstoke on Thursday, 18th January 1753, and since the Basingstoke mails only came in on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays: it seems to be agreed that Lucy's letter was really posted in Basingstoke on Thursday, 18th January 1753.

Mr. Morton in a very brief speech for the defence, disputes this conclusion; and then Mr. Davy making his final speech for the prosecution. He makes general and fervent observations in the approved manner:

"Of all the crimes the human heart can conceive, perjury is the most impious and detestable. But the guilt of this person is so transcendent, that it seems even to defy aggravation.

"To call upon the God of truth in the most solemn manner, and upon the most awful occasion, to attest a falsehood—to imprecate the vengeance of heaven upon her guilty head—to

prostitute the law of the land to the vilest purpose—to triumph in the ruin of an innocent fellow-creature—to commit a murder with the sword of justice;—and then, having stripped her own heart of humanity, by all the arts of hypocrisy to insinuate herself into the compassion of others, is the peculiar sin of this person, not yet twenty years of age ! "

There is a good deal of this sort of thing, which remained in the tradition of the Old Bailey until very recent times. And then, as to the evidence: Mr. Davy emphasizes, very justly, the enormous weight of the Dorsetshire witnesses. He points out that many of these witnesses were unacquainted with each other, that their stories fitted together in an extraordinary manner, that it is not possible to suppose that the whole list of trivial circumstances—the Abbotsbury dancing, the blacksmith with his fiddle, the partners at the dancing, the heavy rains, the floods at Dorchester, the nankeen pawned by George Squires, the dead horse by the roadside, and so forth and so forth—was invented and preconcerted.

Then he meets the objection that the Dorset people may have been wrong in their dates, confused between the New Style and the Old. As he shows; the books of the Excise Office disprove that argument. Andrew Wake, temporary exciseman at Abbotsbury, swore that he was in the " Ship," Abbotsbury, on the 31st December 1752; that he saw Mary, Lucy, and George Squires there. And the office books are produced, and these show that Wake began to

officiate at Abbotsbury on 1st January 1753, and continued there till 14th January. And so Mr. Davy urges, and I have no doubt rightly, that old Mary Squires was at Abbotsbury in Dorset in the early part of January, and could not possibly have cut off Elizabeth Canning's stays on 2nd January, at Enfield Wash. The theory that the simple shepherds of Dorset were right in their facts, but wrong in their dates is thus utterly upset.

The evidence of Alderman Chitty, of Mr. Nash, Mr. Aldridge, and Mr. Hague is next reviewed. Mr. Davy points out that Canning's description of her place of confinement given to the Alderman, before the Raid of 1st February, is both defective and false. She left out many things that were in the loft, and she put in many things that were not in the loft. And it seems probable, though not certain, that she could not have seen the Hertford coach through the boarded window.

And the little discrepancy of the penthouse. Before the Alderman, Elizabeth swore that she slid down over a penthouse, when she made her escape. But when she was taken to Mrs. Wells's on 1st February, it plainly appeared that there was no penthouse. And this ought to have been fatal to the Canning cause from the very first. For it shows, beyond a doubt, that Elizabeth was a deliberate liar. Of course, we are all, or nearly all, inaccurate muddleheads. In spite of the pretended horror and disgust of Counsel, we are in the habit of mixing up people, dates, circumstances; everything, in fact, to a wonder-

ful and almost incredible extent. With the best will in the world; it is extremely difficult to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

But no one, however confused mentally, can muddle into the creation of a non-existent penthouse.

The reason for its invention is not obscure. In the first draught of her fable, Elizabeth had spoken of her prison as up a flight of stairs. Naturally, she thought of these stairs as ordinary house stairs, and of the rooms at the top of them as being about twenty feet from the ground. Hence, she gaily identified the ordinary stairs at Mrs. Wells's house as the stairs up which she was pushed. But when she was laying her information before the Alderman, it struck her that a jump of twenty feet, with no bones broken, might be regarded as incredible; and so on the spur of the moment she very imprudently created a penthouse, by which she might slide down, gracefully and probably.

Mr. Davy notes one inconsistency after another in the various tales of Elizabeth. As to the water in the pitcher, for example. Before the Alderman, she swore that there was some water left in the pitcher when she came away. Before Mr. Fielding, she swore that she drank the last drops on Friday, 26th January—three days before she escaped. At the trial of Mary Squires and Susannah Wells, she swore that she finished the water about half an hour before her escape.

Then as to the Natus people: whatever we may think of their characters: it is certain that

White, the Lord Mayor's officer, saw Judith Natus coming out of the loft, as if just out of bed, on the morning of the Raid. And White describes the bed that he found in the loft; an affair of hay and straw and wool, miserable enough for the cock-loft where Don Quixote and Sancho Panza suffered such things through the Balsam of Fierabras, and the malice of the Enchanted Moor.

Then Mr. Davy deals with an objection, which, naturally enough, had great force with the populace. If Elizabeth Canning, said the defence, was not at Mrs. Wells's house; where was she from the night of 1st January to the night of 29th January? Mr. Davy replies to this that if it is proved that Elizabeth Canning was not at Mrs. Wells's; it does not matter to the prosecution where she was. This is good logic, but Counsel seems to wish for something more. "Her friends," he says, "to do them justice, have been so faithful to her that this secret is yet impenetrable." And he goes on:

"I am strongly inclined to include Mr. Scarrat in this compliment; though I cannot conceive so highly of him, as to suppose he would retain this secret at the expense of his interest; and therefore, when he finds the divulging it consistent with his safety, he may, perhaps, choose to oblige the public with this discovery, rather than satisfy justice in a way that may be more inconvenient to him.

"This man's behaviour throughout the whole of this affair, according to his own account of it, will save me from the imputation of a rash

suggestion. He who thought fit, at first, to help her to a description, by which her evidence was afterwards to be authenticated, and to perjure himself in order to corroborate that evidence, may fairly be presumed a principal agent in the whole contrivance.

" ' Where was she ? ' is a question we are not concerned to resolve: but if you desire to be further satisfied in it, ask Scarrat; if he refuses to inform you—ask the mother: if she, too, refuses it—I would refer you to her conjuror: and if he would reveal so much of his art, as to inform you what led him to tell Mrs. Canning that her daughter was in the hands of an old woman, and would soon return, you would not be far from unravelling this mystery.

" But in all likelihood, the time is not far off from an ample discovery."

Mr. Davy was wrong here. Mr. Scarrat, like the poet Gray, never spoke out. And, in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for August 1773 it is stated that Elizabeth Canning died at Weathersfield, in Connecticut, on the 22nd of July in that year.

From which it appears, by the way, that eighteenth-century magazines must have been made up towards the end of their date month; not, as with us now, in the middle or beginning of the month before.

And Elizabeth, it seemed, guarded her secret to the last. " Notwithstanding the many strange circumstances of her story," remarks Sylvanus Urban, Gentleman, in his issue of August 1773, " none is so strange that it should not be dis-

covered in so many years where she had concealed herself, during the time she had invariably declared she was at the house of Mother Wells."

" The defendant," Mr. Davy proceeds, " has been hitherto very well supported by her managers (that being the name by which her friends have thought fit to call themselves in their late advertisement). But when she shall be delivered up to justice, and find that those people can no longer protect her; when she shall seriously reflect upon the distress to which her guilt has reduced her; conscience, perhaps, may prompt her to atone in some measure for the mischiefs she has occasioned, and she may, at the same time, hope to obtain some remission of punishment, by the gratification of an universal curiosity."

In fact; Mr. Davy said to Mr. Scarrat, " Own up, or we will prosecute you for perjury ": to Elizabeth Canning, " Tell the truth, and your sentence will be made a lenient one." But, as we know, neither responded. Were the true facts so horrible, that no inducement or threat could persuade to confession ? One does not see how this could be so. We do not know whether Mr. Davy was merely " bluffing," or whether he was in possession of certain facts which could not be laid before the Court or technically proved. There is a hint of something of the kind in his cross-examination of Scarrat ; he suggests a quarrel between Mrs. Wells and Scarrat, and a threat of revenge on the part of the latter. Most likely, these questions of Mr. Davy's were the result of information given by Mrs. Wells, and,

probably, true information. But nothing could be proved; the quarrel and the threat had been secret things, done in some black corner of that black house of whoredom at Enfield Wash, with no one at hand to hear. So, it may be, Mr. Davy was possessed of certain facts about Elizabeth's absence and Scarrat's hand in it; but facts not to be proved by the process of the law. The hypothesis seems probable, and chiefly because of Counsel's reiterated insistence on the part played by the " cunning man." For, on the face of it, there seems nothing extraordinary in an ignorant working-woman of the seventeen-fifties going to a fortune-teller to ask him about her missing daughter. There would be nothing extraordinary in an educated duchess of our day going to a medium or *clairvoyante* on a like errand. But Mr. Davy had evidently been instructed that the " cunning man " was a principal actor in the drama played behind the scenes. But the secret was kept. Scarrat probably was aware of the fact that nothing could be proved against him, and that it would be the safest way to hold his tongue. And Elizabeth may have reasoned: a great many people still have the firmest belief in my virtue; and most likely they will always keep this belief. And at the worst; even though I have been found guilty of perjury, I have been found guilty of nothing else. Whatever people may surmise about my doings from 1st January to 29th January: it is only surmise, not knowledge. And service in New England is, probably, not much worse than service in London. But if I were to tell the truth, I might or might

not be able to return to London a year or two sooner; but with my character ruined and blasted and dreadful shame upon my head. I should have to confess horrible things, I should be exposed as whore and hypocrite before all the world, my impersonation of Martyred Chastity, with which I have imposed on half England, would be shamefully, lewdly, abominably dragged in the gutter. I should buy that dubious remission of a year or two much too dearly."

It is possible that the girl was moved by some such consideration to hold her tongue; we can only deal with possibilities.

Then follows some highly technical matter as to Virtue Hall: why she was not called to give evidence. The learned editor of the State Trials subjoins a learned note, showing how the practice of the Scots law differs from that of the English. Virtue Hall had admitted perjury; by English law she was ineligible as a witness: Jeffries, C.J., quoted on this point. But in Scotland, says the editor, this matter would have been ruled differently, as in the trial of Neil for robbery, in which a question was put to a witness of the name of Macairly as to the difference between his evidence and his declaration when the case was precognosced. Macairly denied any difference, was tried for perjury, but " the diet was deserted ": or in other words—let me venture a little in Scots law—the panel was, practically, assoilzied.

Mr. Davy argues weakly enough in excusing Mr. Nash for helping to get up a subscription

" for the unhappy poor girl "—Elizabeth Canning, whom he believed to be a wicked liar. The fact is plain enough; as I have said, Nash was a coward who dreaded the popular fury, and wished to prove himself a good Elizabethan: lest his coffee-house should be wrecked by the mob, and his butlership of the Goldsmiths' Company be taken from him and given to another.

The evidence of Mrs. Canning is dissected very carefully. Counsel is clearly of opinion that the mother was in the plot, whatever it was; but he confesses that he cannot proceed from suspicion to proof.

And as to the handkerchief which was bound over the bleeding ear. Mrs. Myers—a neighbour, it will be remembered—swore that the blood was dropping from the girl's ear upon her shoulder. Lord, the apprentice, declared that the ear was bloody all over, and that the handkerchief was bloody. If that were so, argues Mr. Davy, if the ear had been bleeding for six hours, then one particular part of the handkerchief would be saturated with blood. And then he produces the handkerchief, and shows that there is no mass of blood in one place, but " little spots of blood, in different places, all over the handkerchief, and not at all corresponding with their testimony, but rather like dots made by a finger on purpose."

And Scarrat: he was a total stranger, as he said, both to mother and daughter. Yet he rushes in at the news that Betty has returned, and immediately asks where she has been confined, and she, though near death to all appear-

ance, readily answers the strange man, gives him the Hertfordshire road cue, which he takes up with his guinea to a farthing certitude as to Mrs. Wells. And then Mr. Scarrat proceeds to put leading questions to Canning as to the country round Mrs. Wells's house; and Canning answers in the most satisfactory manner.

Perhaps Mr. Davy was right: Scarrat was in the plot. But I must say that the evidence is consistent, up to this point at all events, with his being nothing worse than an infernal, meddling busybody. To such, other people's affairs, more especially other people's troubles, are like tainted meat to a blowfly.

And then Counsel catches Mr. Scarrat very neatly. Scarrat did not know that other witnesses had described Elizabeth's arrival at Mrs. Wells's on 1st February. She had been taken into the kitchen, they said, and had been placed on the dresser, and she had made no remark as to this kitchen being the place into which she was brought by the two villains at four o'clock on the morning of 2nd January. She had made no remark as to the door in that kitchen, the door which, as she found out later, led to the place of her confinement. Now Scarrat had not been in the kitchen when Elizabeth was taken into it and set upon the dresser. I think he must have been hustling and arranging the prisoners in the parlour. And as we have seen, he had not heard the evidence of the other witnesses. And so, as Mr. Davy recalls to the jury, he was asked what he would have thought of Elizabeth if, on her first coming into the kitchen, she had

taken no notice of the open door and the short flight of steps leading from it to the loft ? And his reply was to the effect that if this had been so, he would have ceased to believe in her.

I think that Mr. Davy went astray over his next point. He says of Scarrat: " This is the man who was present at Mr. Alderman Chitty's granting a warrant against Mrs. Wells for a capital felony; who knew by the description she could not be the person meant, and yet he never dropt the least hint to prevent it." But, in the information laid before the Alderman there was no description of the woman at all. The Alderman reads his minutes of the proceedings before him: . . . " and then a woman forced her (Elizabeth Canning) upstairs into a room. . . ." And the Alderman, being asked whether Canning had described any gipsy or remarkable person, answered:

" I asked her whether she should know the woman again ? She said, she believed she should; but she did not make mention of any extraordinary woman doing this."

And again: If the prosecution were right in holding that Scarrat was deeply involved in the conspiracy, that his " business " on Elizabeth's return had been arranged between him, the girl, and her mother: how is it that he did not arrange to give Elizabeth a description of some room at Mrs. Wells's which would hold good from the first ? Why did he suffer her to fall into a perfect maze of mistakes and flagrant contradictions ? Why did he allow her to invent a penthouse that wasn't there, to blunder so fatally as to the main

staircase of the house? It is quite clear that Scarrat was a malignant scoundrel, that he did his best to get old Mother Wells hanged: but on the larger issue, on the question of his principal part in the disappearance and return of Elizabeth; I am almost inclined to declare that the diet is deserted!

The turnpike man, Beals, is very properly dismissed from consideration. I remarked, when analyzing his evidence, that when the girl was in one of her queer fits she was no more conscious than a potato-sack, according to her mother's statements and her own description. The woman Beals saw was being led along by the hand: you cannot lead a potato-sack: you must drag it or carry it. Besides; Elizabeth wore a purple dress and a black petticoat on the day of her disappearance; the woman of the turnpike story wore a "lightish" gown, or, "light-coloured clothes."

And so with the witnesses who speak of having seen Canning on her way home from Enfield Wash, on 29th January. With this difference that whereas Beals was evidently honest, these latter have every appearance of being suborned perjurers. This will be plain to anyone who refers back to the evidence of David Dyer and Mary Cobb. Elizabeth, it will be recollected, came home blue-black, something between the colour of a man's hat and a bad bruise. The lady seen by Mr. Dyer was very pale and her hands were delicately white. It is true that when Mrs. Cobb met the supposed Elizabeth, Edmonton way, she had turned

blackish. But that is no wonder; for putting Mr. Dyer's and Mrs. Cobb's statements together, it appears that she had been walking at the rate of sixteen miles an hour.

And the evidence as to Mary Squires having been seen at Enfield Wash or near it between 14th December and 23rd January does not give Counsel much trouble. He shows very well that while several of these witnesses speak of books or memoranda confirming their statements, only one book is produced. And that is Mr. Smitheram's book, which proves that Anne Johnson, who had been perfectly certain as to her dates, was utterly wrong about them.

A few brief remarks as to the alleged prison confessions of Mrs. Wells and Mary Squires, a little more about the characters of Fortune Natus and Judith Natus; some Old Bailey rhetoric in a high vein—

"There cannot be a man on this side of hell so abandoned by his Maker, as that rash witness would have you to think [of Fortune Natus]. The earth has never borne such a monster, as to fall in love with naked falsehood. What devil incarnate was ever heard of, who did not incline to truth, till he was warped by some particular temptation to leave her?"

And so forth; great nonsense all of it, since the world is hugely given to lying, as an acuter critic of affairs had observed long before.

Great nonsense, too, on both sides of the case is disclosed by Mr. Davy in dealing with the alleged illiteracy of Elizabeth. The girl had "set her mark" to the information she had laid

before Fielding, the magistrate. Whereupon, her friends had said in effect: " See how illiterate she is ! How could a poor, silly little creature, who can't even write her own name invent such a story ? " An interesting and early form of the education delusion: that information as to the alphabet has some connection with intelligence. This rubbish is counter-rubbished by Mr. Davy; who shows that Elizabeth wrote a very fair, legible hand—and *therefore* we are to infer, was capable of inventing stories to any extent !

A final wrangle as to the admissibility of Virtue Hall: and the Recorder sums up and charges the jury: very fairly and according to the best tradition of the Bench. He warns the jury that " if in stating the several facts that have been laid before you, during the course of this long proceeding, I should accidentally disclose my own opinion, I must desire that it may have no weight, or make the least impression on you, in determining your verdict, otherwise than as the weight of the evidence justifies it."

" The Jury withdrew at twenty minutes after twelve o'clock in the morning to consider their verdict, and returned at fifteen minutes after two, and brought in their verdict, Guilty of Perjury, but not wilful and corrupt.

" Upon which the Recorder told them, ' that he could not consider their verdict, because it was partial; and they must either find her guilty of the whole indictment, or else acquit her.'

" Upon which they were sent out again at

twenty-five minutes after two; and brought in their verdict, Guilty of Wilful and Corrupt Perjury.

"Upon which she was committed by the Court to the custody of the Keeper of Newgate."

On the following Monday, 13th May, Elizabeth Canning was called to the bar to receive sentence. Thereupon, her counsel delivered affidavits from two of the jurymen, Mr. Frome and Mr. Russell, stating that the verdict was given against their consciences. The affidavits were read; and the purport of them was that the two jurymen were more convinced than ever that Elizabeth Canning had been imprisoned at Mother Wells's house, and had suffered wrong there. But they considered that she had made a little mistake, quite an unintentional mistake in the trifling matter of the water in the pitcher—Elizabeth had given three different accounts of the lasting of the water—and so, perhaps, she was a perjurer, but purely a technical perjurer: hence the first verdict. But on the Court sending the jury back to reconsider the matter; the other jurymen impressed on Messrs. Russell and Frome that the words "wilful and corrupt" were purely formal, and that it would be better to agree as to their verdict. Whereupon, the two jurymen gave in, but were much troubled in their consciences afterwards, and so made their affidavits to the above effect, with "a sincere desire to prevent . . . the said E. Canning's suffering that infamy and punishment" which they were fully satisfied she had in no wise merited.

ELIZABETH CANNING,

Drawn from the Life, as ſhe ſtood at the Bar to receive her Sentence, in th Seſſion's Houſe, in the *Old-Bailey*.

When the affidavits had been read, the Court sent for the foreman of the jury, Mr. Manning, and asked to be informed in the matter. Then the foreman said:

" That all of them, but these two, were of opinion she was guilty of the whole indictment, but the said two did not think she was wilfully guilty, yet nevertheless thought she was guilty; but believing somebody had seduced the girl, and forged the story, for her to tell and stand by (in short they all believed so): and upon such belief they found, and gave their verdict, Guilty, but not wilful: but were informed by the Recorder that he could not take that verdict, for they must either acquit her or else find her guilty of the whole indictment.

" That when they withdrew to consider again of the charge, the said two men declared they could not come in to find her guilty of the whole indictment; but, upon arguing the case with them, and telling them they might as well find her guilty of the whole indictment, they said, they could not agree to it, unless the rest of the jury would consent to recommend her to the Court for mercy. That then they all agreed to find her guilty of the whole indictment; which they all agreed she was guilty of before, except the said two; and accordingly gave in their verdict, Guilty of Wilful and Corrupt Perjury " —but with a recommendation of mercy.

Then Elizabeth's counsel insisted on a new trial, and the Court refused to grant one. Her counsel still insisted, and quoted the Case of Ashley and Simons the Jew; and the curious in

such things are referred to the State Trials, where they will find the history of Henry Simons of Ostrog in Volhinia, near the Ukraine, in Poland, who landed at Harwich in 1751 and fell in to strange adventures. But the Court deferred all argument till the first day of the following sessions, 30th May 1754. And on this day, Willes, L.C.J., acquainted the Court that a new trial could not be granted, since the case was not on all fours with the Case of Ashley and Simons the Jew. And so Elizabeth Canning was brought to the bar to receive judgment.

And then Sir John Barnard, an Alderman, stood up and recommended her for mercy, and that her sentence might only be six months' imprisonment, for he believed she was not guilty alone; and seven other aldermen joined with him.

" Then Lord Chief Justice Willes told them, he had observed that collections had been made for her amounting to considerable sums of money; and if her sentence was only to remain in Newgate, there would be such sums collected, and such assemblies of an evening, as would render her sentence rather a diversion than a punishment. Nor the pillory he nowise judged safe, fearing much mischief might be done. And, concluding, that he thought her notoriously guilty. In the which opinion all the other judges joined, with my Lord Mayor, the Recorder, and two aldermen."

In fact, the Court divided, after a fashion which has long been obsolete at the Old Bailey.

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Nine were for a sentence of transportation; eight —all aldermen—for six months' imprisonment only.

"Then Elizabeth Canning addressed the Court with the following speech, with a low voice:—'That she hoped they would be favourable to her; that she had no intention of swearing the gipsy's life away; and that what had been done, was only defending herself; and desired to be considered as unfortunate.'"

The Recorder then delivered sentence.

"Elizabeth Canning you now stand convicted (upon the clearest proof) of wilful and corrupt perjury; a crime attended with the most fatal and dangerous consequences to the community, though (as yet) it is not punished with death. Your trial has taken up a great deal of time, and the several witnesses have undergone the strictest examination; and I think I may venture to affirm, that there is not one unprejudiced person, of the great numbers who have attended it, but must be convinced of the justice and impartiality of the jury in the verdict they have given."

Mr. Recorder then looks back with horror at the spectacle of Elizabeth forswearing herself and endeavouring to compass the life of a fellow creature, "though the most abject." He comments on the extraordinary mania which the case produced, and hopes "that this iniquity of yours will instruct mankind not to suffer their credulity to get the better of their reason, by giving way to those very early impressions, which the artifice of falsehood too often makes."

The Recorder gives his personal impressions of the case:

"As I attended both your trial, as well as that of Mary Squires, it may be expected that I should declare my thoughts as well of one as the other; I therefore, in the most solemn manner, affirm that I always thought your evidence false, and that the witnesses produced in your defence were most grossly mistaken."

The Recorder congratulates Elizabeth on being "in a country where severe and sanguinary laws are not so familiar"—as in other lands.

One wonders whether he were serious: whether he really thought the savage, the unutterably and shamefully savage penal code of eighteenth-century England was a merciful one. They had almost hanged the old gipsy for the alleged theft of a pair of stays, worth ten shillings! However, to the Sentence:

"The judgment of this Court is: That you shall be imprisoned in the gaol of Newgate for one month; and after the expiration of your imprisonment, you shall be transported to some of His Majesty's colonies or plantations in America for the term of seven years; and if within that time you return, and are found at large in any of His Majesty's dominions of Great Britain or Ireland, you shall suffer death as a felon without benefit of clergy."

So ended the great trial of Elizabeth Canning. It will have been noted that the judges were forced almost to humbug the jury into giving the obvious verdict of Guilty; and the more

sensible members of the jury, in their turn, humbugged the less sensible, the two affidavit-making imbeciles, Frome and Russell. And out of the ten aldermen who voted as to the sentence, all but two were in favour of giving Elizabeth the time of her life for six months in Newgate; a very jolly place if you had plenty of money.

More pamphlets were written. Some said the obvious thing; that Elizabeth had hidden herself to give birth to a child; others that she had shown herself to be an enthusiast and had been inflamed with wine during her imprisonment; that she would have discovered the whole secret, if she had not been tutored and buoyed up by the Methodists. The wonder to me is that nobody found out that the whole business was a Popish Plot.

The pamphlets charging Elizabeth with enthusiasm drew forth a protest from the Revd. William Reyner, Rector of St. Mary Magdalen, Old Fish Street. He had gone to Newgate to give ghostly comfort and counsel to the girl; and declared that, so far from her showing any signs of enthusiasm, she professed herself a member of the Church of England, and joined " cordially and earnestly in the devotional offices of the liturgy."

The contrast between the Church of England and enthusiasm is not quite so funny as it seems. " Enthusiam " in the eighteenth century implied fanaticism with a strong dash of hysteria, and was usually associated with Methodism, which appeared to the populace of 1750 much as the Salvation Army appeared to the populace of 1880.

And Elizabeth Canning herself issued a statement. She sticks to the monstrous lie that she had told:

"Being informed that a report has been diligently propagated and prevailed, that I had squeaked, and declared I would confess or reveal the whole, upon condition I was pardoned, and permitted to conceal names; and that I had for answer, if I expected any mercy, I must name names; I am compelled to declare, and do in the most serious manner, and with the strictest regard to truth, hereby declare, that I remain at this instant of time fully persuaded, and well assured, that Mary Squires was the person who robbed me; that the house of Susannah Wells was the place in which I was confined twenty-eight days; and that I did not in my several informations or examinations before the different magistrates, or in my evidence on the trial of the said Mary Squires and Susannah Wells, knowingly, in any material, or even in the most minute circumstance, deviate from the truth."

She was transported to New England in August 1754. She is said to have married an "opulent Quaker," named Treat. She died, as we have seen, in 1773, at Weathersfield in Connecticut. Her secret died with her.

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